# Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

MAY

107

RPGA

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# Notes from HQ

## Virtual Seattle

For those of you who aren't familiar with this system—which has been running since the GEN CON® Game Fair in 1993—there are three sorts of *Shadowrun* tournaments you're likely to find at conventions. There are non-Network *Shadowrun* tournaments, Network-sanctioned *Shadowrun* tourneys, and Virtual Seattle tourneys.

Virtual Seattle is a tournament campaign in which you can play your own character from convention to convention, within a set of rules modified to keep things balanced. You start off with a new PC who's made a big score, but who improves within carefully-monitored parameters after that.

So how was this system born? Remember the story about the Little Panzer That Could, saying, "I *think* I can nuke 'em. I *think* I can ..."

Seriously, Virtual Seattle came into being in a rather fairy-tale manner. About three years ago, I approached Tom "Mr. Shadowrun" Dowd at the 1992 Game Fair with the idea that Margaret and I had concocted about an ongoing *Shadowrun* tournament system. He listened politely for a few minutes and said, "Sounds great. Work it out, and get back to me. FASA would be happy to support you." Yup, it happened just like that.

Since then, Jean Rabe, Dave Gross, and Kevin Melka of the RPGA® Network have been completely supportive and helpful with the organization of this non-TSR game venture. So now both FASA and the RPGA Network collaborate to present Virtual Seattle, which I'm happy to say seems to be gaining in popularity faster than a Troll on a Viking combat bike. Margaret and I still coordinate, edit, and occasionally write—though we could use lots of help in the author and database maintenance departments. Any interest out there in the shadows?

With the help of POLYHEDRON® Newszine, we'll try to keep you updated on all the latest biz, chummers. 'Til then, slot 'n run!

Ron & Mj

## Last Dance

Was it just a couple of months ago that the music stopped and we all tried to sit in one-too-few seats? We're at it again, but it looks as though the game of musical chairs ends soon, and we'll all settle into our new places for a time. Me, I'm moving over to edit DUNGEON® Adventures, which will be a whole new set of challenges. But as excited as I am about that move, I'm sorry to leave POLYHEDRON® Newszine. It's been wonderful fun, and I'll miss working on it.

The newszine's passing into good hands. I had the pleasure of meeting Duane Maxwell several times before he was hired, and you couldn't ask for a better man for the job. With Scott and Kevin, he'll be working hard this year to make the Network and the Newszine better than ever. Write Duane a letter to welcome him aboard, or just to say, "Hello" (but if you've got any more groovy postcards, send those to *me*!).

While I am leaving the Newszine, I'm certainly not leaving the Network. I'll pop up here and there, write a Living Jungle or Living Death tournament now and then, judge a few rounds each convention, and remain a general nuisance.

I'd like to thank Jean Rabe for making sure it was always more fun than work, Kevin Melka for being the perfect foil and a generally good guy, Judy Mueller for showing me where to find my head when I couldn't find it with both hands, Larry Smith for many lessons in design and tale-spinning, everyone who produced the Newszine (Tracy, Dave, Paul, and Yvonne), the terrific authors and artists who have contributed to the Newszine, and everyone who ever wrote a pleasant letter, sent a delightful postcard, chatted online, offered good criticism, or bought me a beer at a convention. You've all made it much, much more fun than a real job.

Sayonara,

## Live from HQ, It's...

Hi! I'm Duane Maxwell, the new editor of POLYHEDRON Newszine. For the foreseeable future, I will be the person to whom you address any questions, comments, suggestions, or gripes (perish the thought!) regarding the Newszine.

Over the next several months, we here at the RPGA Network will be looking at ways we can better support the needs of our growing organization; this may include changes in the way the Newszine is put together. I welcome any input the members have concerning POLYHEDRON. What do you want to see done with the Newszine? Do you prefer gaming articles that only Network members get? Would you like to see more "newsie" sort of stuff, like what's happening with Network members and clubs across the world? Do you want us to concentrate strictly on our official tournament settings (i.e. RAVENS BLUFF™ The LIVING CITY™, MALATRA™ The Living Jungle, The Living Death, and Virtual Seattle)? Here is the opportunity for you to let us know what you want. After all, this is your Newszine. So don't be shy, drop us a line, either by letter or on the RPGA forums on either GEnie or America Online.

Hope to hear from you,

Duane

## More New Blood

While we're introducing Duane, I thought I'd introduce myself, the new Network coordinator, Scott Douglas. Duane and Dave have allowed me this modest space to say hello.

We are going to be looking at the Network in different ways for the next few months and, I hope, hearing ideas from members who care about the direction the Network should take.

Please write us with your ideas, your thoughts, your dreams for the Network. (Hey, judge and player rankings *are* on the mailing label now!) Anything might happen...

**About the Cover**

Staff artist Tony Szczudlo's stunning portrayal of this lovely elven mage provides the introduction to this month's Virtual Seattle feature.

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# Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

*Volume 15, Number 5*
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# Forgotten Deities

## Moander the Darkbringer

***by Eric Boyd***

**Power:** Lesser (later Demi-)
**Plane:** Abyss
**AoC:** Rotting death, corruption
**Align:** CE
**WAL:** CE
**Symbol:** Fanged mouth gaping in the palm of a hand
**Sex:** None

Moander is an ancient god who has been banished from the Realms on more than one occasion. To the elves of Myth Drannor, Moander epitomized the decay and rotting evil that could corrupt elves and destroy the forests they held so dear. In a sense, Moander represented a more comprehensible (and tempting) force of evil to the surface elves than distant Lolth, worshipped by their exiled dark elven kin.

In recent years, Moander was inadvertently freed by the sell-sword Alias and her companions through the manipulations of the Cult of Moander. Moander's physical presence in the Realms was destroyed with the aid of Mist, the red dragon, but the Rotting God nearly returned with the aid of a tribe of saurials it had enslaved. Moander was eventually slain by a human bard, Finder Wyvernspur, who seized its divine power. It is believed Moander is permanently destroyed and that it can never bother the Realms nor any other part of the multiverse again. It is possible, however, that scheming individuals may try to reform the Cult of Moander for their own purposes. Any "priest" of Moander would only be a charlatan—unless, of course, some other dark power chooses to invest such individuals with clerical powers. It is quite possible that the Spider Goddess, Lolth, might choose to assume the guise of Moander to spread further corruption and evil among the hated surface elves.

*illustration by Phillip Robb*

### Moander's Priests

A newly formed Cult of Moander that includes true priests must be backed by some other dark power. Assuming the cultists do not realize that their divine sponsor is other than Moander, it is likely that the cult will continue as before. Upon their initiations, servants of Moander must undergo a ceremony in which a seed of Moander is absorbed into the initiate. This seed slowly grows throughout the body until the cultists' entire internal structure is composed of rotting plant material. The only outward manifestation is a small flowered tendril emerging from one ear and winding through the hair. The recipient remains under the direct mental and physical control of Moander, whenever the power so chooses, and always acts according to the instructions of the power and the cult. Cultists of Moander are particularly concerned with spreading intelligent vegetable life throughout the Realms including shambling mounds, algoids, and vegepygmies (see mold man and russet mold in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™). Any new cult will seek to recover the *Gauntlets of Moander,* an artifact believed to have been lost within the ruins of Myth Drannor.

**Ability Score Requirement** Con 13*, **Alignment** CE; **Weapons Permitted** any (scimitar first); **AR** any; **Raiment** any green and brown garment, flowered tendril emerging from ear and wrapped around hair; **Spheres:** All, Chaos*, Elemental, Plant, Time*, Weather*; **Special** *Seed of Moander* (P5); **Powers** 1) double area of effect and duration of all spells in sphere of plants 1) *speed rot* 3/day (variant of P3 *slow rot* which rots all plants in area of effect within one day) 3) *entangle* (W1), 5) *plant growth* (P3, all plants rot instead of becoming

more fruitful); **Turn Undead** nil; **Quest Spells** stalker or abundance (all vegetation within the area of effect will be ripened to the point of rotting).

**Seed of Moander**

5th Level Priest Spell (Alteration)
**Sphere:** Plant
**Range:** Touch
**Components:** V,S,M
**Duration:** Permanent
**Casting Time:** 1 turn
**Area of Effect:** Special
**Saving Throw:** Special

This spell was developed by priests of Moander centuries ago as a method of enslaving sentient beings to the will of Moander. The spell itself results in the creation of a seed of Moander, which can then transform a victim into a servant of Moander.

To create a seed of Moander, a priest must wrap an emerald fragment (base value 100gp) in a ball of rotting plant material. The resulting spherical seed must be soaked in unholy water for twenty-four hours and then cursed (reverse of bless spell) in the name of Moander. The priest must then cast this spell on the proto-seed, transforming the sphere into a green, spine-covered burr about the size and shape of a horse chestnut burr. The seed is sticky, and the spines end in tiny hooks. (The emerald is absorbed by the magic of the spell, its reputed healing properties warped by the creation of the seed.)

The seed of Moander will attach itself to the skin of any living sentient creature it comes into contact with. (Treat the seed as an oil flask if hurled in combat.) The pod will burst, and a cloud of spores will be released. If the creature fails a saving throw versus spells, the spores will be inhaled, and begin to work a transformation of the host. Over the next twenty-four hours, the spores will gradually replace the host's internal body structure with rotting plant material. Externally the host will appear unchanged except for the faint odor of pollen and a small flowered vine wrapped around one ear. Careful examination will reveal the vine actually emerges from the ear. A heal spell will save the host if cast within the twenty-four hour period. Otherwise the process is irreversible, and the minion of Moander will serve the Rotting God until destroyed.

The newly-created minion of Moander will retain all of its previous abilities and skills, but all of its thoughts will be known to Moander and it will be under the complete control of the God. Only if Moander is completely absent from the Realms (i.e. all of the god's avatars in the Realms have been destroyed) will the original host be able to express its free will. Without this stabilizing effect of Moander's power, however, the body will decay into a rotting mass of plant material within a week. ❑

This month, we continue our look at slade's picks for the **Disposable Magical Items Contest**.

# slade's corners

**Cat Talisman of Nine Lives**

**XP Value** 2000 **GP Value** 5000

This talisman looks like a black cat with green eyes. If the wearer is struck by a melee or missile weapon (including magical weapons) and the resulting damage brings him below one hit point, the talisman's power will negate as much damage as required to leave him with one hit point. This power will not work on any other sort of attack or source of damage. The talisman functions automatically, and the wearer cannot will the device not to work. Every time the talisman power is activated, its tail shrinks slightly; when it has workednine times (total, not just for the current wearer), the tail disappears and the talisman becomes a piece of non-magical ornamentation.

**David Kelman**
**Charles Town, WV**

**Self-Attaching Buttons**

**XP Value** 300 **GP Value** 600

These buttons can be placed upon a surface of any composition. When a command word is spoken, they will secure themselves to the material with a strong thread. Once attached, they become non-magical, and their thread can be cut by any appropriate means. These devices were developed by a mage whose expanding girth often caused an embarrassing loss of his buttons. One time, when running from a group of brigands, his trousers lost a button, causing him to become entangled and trip. Since then, he has taken care to prevent a repeat of such an incident.

**John Pollock, *Contest Winner***
**Cavalier, ND**

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# Elminster's Everwinking Eye

## Well-Hidden Treasures

***by Ed Greenwood***

Our "treasure tour" of Turmish continues in this column, with a look at some of the lesser treasures that (most folk believe) have thus far eluded the searchings of those interested in finding them.

### Peldrathan's Pool

This way-village encircles a long, placid pond girt with old and beautiful shade-trees, and home to many fish (notably silvertails, blood-red leapers, and the grotesque-looking but succulent bottom-dwellers known as muckfins).

Peldrathan is a long-dead priest of Eldath; the lands around the village reflect his love of the beauty of nature, and his care and diligence in working to preserve it. Over twenty clergy of Eldath dwell in the area today, tending the copses and fern-beds that Peldrathan established. Their vigilance keeps the village from spreading—and makes the task of those seeking the treasure buried somewhere within sight of the village much harder.

This treasure consists of the entire treasury and stock of the Ompthal gem-dealing family, who fled from a back-alley merchant war in Alaghôn long ago, made it this far, and were caught by their foes. In a long, confused night, the Ompthals used their most powerful artifact to shroud the entire area in concealing, magic-cloaking mists (whose aftereffects still confuse all detection spells in the area today) to hide where they buried their family wealth. The power of the artifact was exhausted in hiding their belongings, however, and their subsequent attempt to escape into the fog was in vain. The Ompthals were all slain, and their foes—the rival families of Jongleer and Terithtam—reduced greatly in numbers.

The undead resulting from this night of horror have been systematically destroyed by the clergy of Eldath over the years, but the priests have no interest in laying their hands on coffers of lifeless gems.

They do have a very great interest in stopping others from digging up half the forest around the Pool looking for the gems, however—and have been known to strike out with spells against such despoilers and intruders, causing the deaths of a score or more of adventurers over the years. The ferocity of these priests, whose church has such a peaceful, nonviolent reputation, has astonished more than one adventurer.

One spell employed by the ever-watchful "treeshadows" of the Pool (so-called by villagers because they often see the drably-robed priests flitting from tree to tree) is the third-level Wheel of Bones spell, now gaining popularity among other faiths across Faerûn.

**Wheel of Bones (Alteration)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sphere:** | Necromantic |
| **Range:** | Special |
| **Components:** | V,S,M |
| **Duration:** | 1 round/level |
| **Casting Time:** | 3 |
| **Area of Effect:** | Special |
| **Saving Throw:** | None |

This spell requires at least two bones, or bone fragments, from any source. The magic transforms them into a fast-spinning pinwheel of many bones that whirl about one of the caster's limbs (chosen during casting). The caster can't grasp anything with that limb or cast any other spell without ending the wheel of bones, which fades instantly into nothingness when it expires. The caster can will it to end at any time.

A *wheel of bones* inflicts 1d6+4 hp damage when a priest hits a foe with it (making a successful attack roll with the limb it surrounds), and can also "fire" bone shards once per round. The blow attack is made with the priest's normal THAC0, but hurled shards always strike at THAC0 7 (regardless of the priest's own attack prowess). Shards cause 1d4 damage each, and 1d3 of them fly at the target of a shard attack (the caster designates the target, but has no control over how many shards are hurled at it).

The damage and duration of a *wheel of bones* is unaffected by the number of shards it "fires," and the caster of the wheel is never harmed by his own bone shards, regardless of where they fly, ricochet, or strike.

Some adventurers have reported that the clergy of Eldath also seem to be able to make trees move about, so that

***The pursuit of treasure provides the general populace with both a method of ridding themselves of fools and the desperate, and of gaining free entertainment from the antics of treasure-seekers. Such benefits are well worth the cost of a few coins and pretty stones.***

**—Myrintar Hasantar, Sage of Suzail**
***Things A Knight Should Know***
**The Year of the Mace**

maps of the paths, clearings, and distinctive trees around the Pool made in one year may be useless by the end of the same season.

## Quorngar

This town is dominated by industrious families of gnome stonemasons, although there are dwarven smiths and halfling artisans on its governing council (the Crescent, named for the shape of the ancient stone table they meet around—a sacred sacificial altar of some long-forgotten god, some sages who've examined its runic inscriptions believe).

Quorngar has always provided cut stone to Turmish, but local workers also turn out an endless stream of stout strongchests, coffers, and travel-cases—of the useful, sturdy, long-lasting, plain sort.

Some merchant concerns in port cities all around The Sea of Fallen Stars (Teflamm, Tsurlagol, the Sembian ports, and Westgate in particular) order these containers by the thousand, and there are persistent rumors of secret cargo slipping out of the country in some of them.

Quorngar also has a much more widely known and verifiable tale of treasure: the saga of the Lost Hoard of Halaglathgar. A subject of ongoing and sometimes heated debate in local taverns (such as The Stone Stump) even today, the hoard of treasure—coins, ingots, weapons, armor, statues, bundles of tradeivory, jewelry, and jewelled sundries seized from many victims over the years—is thought by some to lie scattered under the cobbled streets of the town, hidden by a thief who used an earth elemental called forth from a magic item to do the burying in a single night to escape detection, but perished (a year later) before he could dig up more than a few baubles. Others think the treasure was uncovered when local quarrying broke into the cavern that the great red wyrm Halaglathgar sealed before flying off (never to return) some six hundred summers before—and that those who found it used magic to transport it to the cellars of a particular house in the town. Those who hold to this belief seldom share any agreement as to just which house the treasure lies beneath, and argue this point furiously. Whatever the true resting-place of the treasure, everyone in Quorngar agrees on three things: the treasure was (and remains) somewhere very near by, it is vast—and it is haunted.

The dragon left some sort of a guardian creature behind—a small being that can fly, become invisible, and fade into one part of the treasure only to teleport to another part of the treasure, apparently at will, and appear out of it. This property makes the guardian (which can bite, and also wields some sort of sleep-venomed bladed weapon) very hard to corner and slay, and allows it to catch treasure-raiders alone and unawares, putting them to slumber with its blade and taking the treasure away while they're senseless. Some folk believe this guardian is a leprechaun, others think it is a sprite, and still others insist it is some sort of guardian ghost or other powerful, hitherto unknown creature. The truth—and the whereabouts of the treasure—remain a mystery.

Adventurers who want to dig up streets will be forbidden to do so—and fined and expelled from town if they try a second time after an initial warning. Adventurers who want to dig in a cellar will typically be charged 25 gp plus 1 gp/day by the owner of the building to do so (and must bear all costs of carting away earth and performing necessary home repairs themselves).

## Ravilar's Cloak

This upland miners' village is a fairly rough-and-ready place where the most common local attraction is a knot of drunken men bursting out of a tavern (such as the infamous drinking-hole known as The Dog and Bone, or the slightly grander establishment called The Griffon Cup) to get enough room in the street outside for a proper flying-fists fight.

Substantial wealth in the form of miners' sacks of rough-cut gems, gold nuggets, and crude-smelted ores passes through "the Cloak" constantly—and the ranger whose vigilant protection against bugbear and other predators from without, and lawlessness from within, gave the place its name, is no longer alive to police the village.

Warriors who call themselves "factors" try to keep murders to a minimum (and their own pockets full to boot) by assembling large groups of armed bodyguards, and buying up miners' hauls for guarded transportation to smelters and markets elsewhere—but these men have their rivalries, feuds, ambushes, and pitched battles too. Over the years, a sizeable amount of loot has gone missing from the hands of dead, dying, or sorely-wounded owners in the village.

In particular, the tellers-of-tales in the taverns remember *the flying helm,* a magical helmet said to be infused with the soul of a dead warrior. This obvi-

*illustration by George Vrbanic*

ously sentient magical item was seen to fly from the head of its owner when he was slain with poisoned arrows in an alleyway of Ravilar's Cloak, and disappeared into the night. In the twelve seasons since, the Helm has been seen repeatedly, skimming along close to the ground at sunset, "seeking dropped coppers." Locals firmly believe the Helm has some way of picking up and carrying small, unattended things—and that it steals coins, knives, tankards, and anything else it can find a use for. It has been seen settling onto the heads of sleeping men, and some folk say it must be "stealing their dreams," or enspelling them to serve it unwittingly when they wake.

Recently, when a cesspool in the city was drained, a sack of emeralds worth more than 686,000 gp was found. Some folk in "the Cloak" think the gems were only a small part of the wealth of the man who once lived next to the cesspool: Alataz Thrindol, a bald, saturnine merchant from Telflamm, whose steely nerves and ready weapons discouraged criticisms of his sometimes sharp dealings. Thrindol was a far-traveled man before he came to "the Cloak," dwelt in the village for a dozen years, and then set out on a journey from which he has still—seven years later—not returned. A factor from Calimshan, Rastar of the Blades, has taken possession of Thrindol's house—and tales are beginning to accumulate around him, too ... it seems several villagers have seen gargoyles diving down to the roof of his house, or flapping up aloft from it, late on dark, moonless nights.

Rastar is only one of two dozen or more villagers who bear watching. All of these notables have mysterious reputations, and in the tales told about them in the taverns, all are said to be rich. The mines north and especially northwest of "the Cloak" show no signs of being worked out, so in time there may be many more wealthy citizens to watch.

## Regalia

This small village is a favorite stopover for caravans on the road, and is crammed with quaint shops, skilled artisans (limners and musicians in particular), and goldsmiths. Its name comes from its once-great fame as the home of Indyl, a half-elven crafter of crowns, orbs, scepters, belts, gauntlets, and masks to the decadent rulers of half a hundred principalities, cities, and vestpocket realms around The Sea of Fallen Stars (most of which have long since vanished).

Indyl is long dead, and the wealth and splendor has long stopped rushing into and out of Regalia, but it is still the place to buy ornamented goldwork of all sorts (from dagger-sheaths to finger-sheaths)—and it sports a hundred or so legends about this or that stolen, never paid for, or unfinished regalia hidden somewhere in or near the village. One tale even tells of a chamber underneath a stream where a dozen crowns are hanging on hooks on the wall, glowing with fresh-laid enchantments that have never been used, awaiting the return of an artisan who will never come to claim them—having been murdered by a jealous rival.

It is local custom to hide precious metals and gems by building them into unlikely items (chamberpots, stools, and the like). There is a tale told with glee at The Handful of Stars tavern about the greybearded regular patron who was attacked by an outlander who coveted his gold belt-buckle—and revealed that his old, crooked staff was a staff of power (and that he was capable of wielding it) in a most spectacular manner!

It is true that at festivals, the folk of Regalia turn out in jewelry that some kings would envy—but thieves are warned: more than one spectral harpist (detailed in FOR4 *Code of the Harpers*) and watchghost (detailed in *The Ruins of UnderMountain* boxed set) attend such events, and take a dim view of onsite redistribution of wealth.

Our "treasure tour" of Turmish will conclude next time around (and I can tell by Elminster's grin that he's got something up his sleeve for the future ... but then, perhaps he's just trying to keep me guessing).

❑

# Dispel Confusion

In which settings, besides the DARK SUN® game setting, will psionics be allowed? And none of that stuff about whatever the gamemaster decides! I *am* the DM and would like to know in which settings the designers at TSR have decided to allow psionics.

**Vince Lehto**
**Smyrna, TN**

On the FORGOTTEN REALMS® world, psionics were once extremely rare, but following the Avatar trilogy of novels, psionics have been on the rise. Because the numerous realms of Kara-Tur and Zakhara are located on the same world as are the Forgotten Realms, psionics would also be found there with the same frequency.

In the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting, psionic powers are an old, established facet of life.

On Krynn, in the DRAGONLANCE® setting, no natives are known to exhibit psionic powers. What few psionicists live on this world likely came from other worlds via spelljamming vessels.

Speaking of space travel, the SPELLJAMMER® campaign is the natural home of many psionic creatures, and psionicists may be found in wildspace and the crystal spheres of Io's Islands and the Astromundi Cluster.

The world of MYSTARA™ setting has never witnessed the use of psionics in the present era, but tales tell of visitsin past millenia by gods from other worlds who may have possessed psionic powers.

The inner and outer planes are another natural setting for psionic abilities.

Finally, psionics are known in the realms of Mist, the RAVENLOFT® campaign. However, the nature of the Demiplane of Dread restricts some powers.

I hope this puts your mind to rest.

–H

# Virtual Seattle

## A Tournament Campaign for *Shadowrun*

***by Ron & Margaret Heintz***

*Welcome to Virtual Seattle. The 2050s are here. Technology is at the cutting edge of cyberpunk visions. People can merge with machines and with the vast, worldwide computer net, the Matrix. The Sixth World has awakened; the peoples and creatures of legend walk the shadows once more.*

*Between the cracks of this world fall the Shadowrunners, nameless and unidentifiable, sought after, yet despised by the corporations who hire them to do their dirty work. Their only true stock in trade is their untracability in a world where everyone is a number in the machine.*

*If you have the edge it takes to run the shadows, read on.*

### World View

**Who You Are**
To begin with, you're a SINless Shadowrunner: no day job, no fake ID. In the future world of Virtual Seattle, that means you have no rights in the eyes of the law. So, if Lone Star catches you in the act, they'll probably save the tax payers' money by skipping all the intermediate steps and go straight to the execution part. Less paperwork, too.

However, on the plus side, you are employed as part of a Shadowrunning team which earns you enough money to survive (in luxury sometimes). The team's patron is one of the continent's premier decker/fixers, Claudia Tyger. Claudia, or Ms. Tyger, will be able to get you some information, but she's not omniscient. If she was, she wouldn't need you chummers. She also maintains your HQ and sometime hidey-hole, The Tyger's Lair. You never go there unless your trail is subzero.

**Where You Are**
You're in Seattle, the freeport city belonging to the United Canadian and American States, and totally surrounded by the Salish Shidhe Council —sort of a country within a country: just the environment for international, high-powered wheeling and dealing. Smuggling, to bypass the Native American Nations' tariffs and stricter shipping laws, is also a lucrative trade in the frontier city-state.

**The Good Guys**
Well, to be brutally honest, the good guys are who Claudia says they are, and that's usually your employer. It's considered poor form to pry into your boss' business, and it's considered stupid to believe blindly. Your life depends on your striking a happy medium.

**The Bad Guys**
As in the real world, there are very few evil people. There are a lot of people with different goals, however, and lots of times they're armed.

**What To Expect**
Let's role-play. Pretend you're walking down the street of your home town with full military armor carrying a large weapon, say an assault rifle or the ever-popular Panther Assault Cannon. What would happen?

First there'd be a general panic among the public. Then the cops would send in their SWAT team. They'd ask you nicely to drop your weapon and, if you didn't, they'd shoot you dead. If the cops didn't think they could handle it, they'd call in the National Guard or Army and ask them to help out.

Well, chummer, in Virtual Seattle it's much the same—except they don't ask you to drop the weapon; they just nuke you from orbit. Also, for the average cop on the street, any magic user is as dangerous as a troll with a Panther Assault Cannon. And, again, they don't ask for a list of spells first, so don't assume that your Bear Adept is safe. These are people protecting either the citizens of Seattle or their corporation's assets, so they can't afford to go slowly.

So, does this mean that you can't have your myriad of big guns or can't play a magician? Of course you can! Just stay in the shadows, runner.

**Your Contract with Claudia**
Any profit is equally shared with Claudia (hey, she has overhead and stuff, too!). Your GM will come up with a rough total. Players can take either the cash share or the actual loot. If your character doesn't survive the adventure, then a certain amount of stuff may be left to his or her heir. Your designated heir can be your new Virtual Seattle character. It can't be another player's character. For details, see "Character Death and Wills."

**Improving Your Character**
See page 13 for character creation information. Once you've got a character, your runner's skills and attributes are improved as per *Shadowrun II* rules. Gear is another matter. Your character can purchase any gear from any sourcebook as long as the STREET INDEX is less than or equal to 1.25. The cost is as per the cost column times the street index. You don't need REF approval for this. This includes cyberware, but not Bioware or Genetech. The latter are available only through play.

Claudia Tyger has access to a limited amount of gear with a Street Index of 1.25 to 3. Cost to the player is cost multiplied by Street Index. Claudia will be able to get one item per person after each adventure, assuming that the character didn't tick her off. An "item" is one object or up to 100 rounds of ammo, or a six-pack of grenades or explosives. No Bioware or Genetech.

Anything with a Street Index higher than 3 you cannot get unless you get access to it during the adventure. This also includes all military and security vehicles as well as the special accessories of the *Rigger Black Book* (pages 119-120). You may also be allowed to keep some gear found in the run. Check with your referee.

In addition, magic-capable Characters may buy one new spell between each adventure. It is assumed to be learned successfully at any Force rating you can afford, as per SRII, p. 132. Buy it from a Talismonger Contact, if you have one, at 1,000¥ per Force Rating.

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**Elective Surgery:** Remember, surgery still requires a surgeon who needs to be paid. You'll be in the hospital for a minimum of 3 days for elective surgery. This will cost 3,500¥. Post-op, non-PC, magic healing costs 2,000¥; Claudia can arrange it. A PC magical healing (must be a player at the table) costs whatever they want to charge. Non-magical healing will entail lots of Regular or Intensive Care: say, 3d6 x 750¥ extra for the stay. (That's right, get out your 2,000¥.) Elective surgery cannot be carried out during the scenario unless it says so, not even a jack at a Mall. You do it between scenarios.

Virtual Seattle characters may also trade/sell items to and buy from other characters, during or between scenarios. Spells may be traded/sold between scenarios only, up to a maximum of two spells between each scenario, and you must have the Karma and the time, of course. You may make your own learning rolls (at the end of the adventure or just before the beginning of the next one, in front of the referee).

**Effects of Lifestyle**

**1. Healing:** Since a single wound can be Treated/Healed magically only once, characters will, occasionally, have physical wounds that need healing by the end of the scenario. (Remember, DocWagon just stabilizes you and delivers you to a hospital.) Virtual Seattle characters may be healed for the same cost as listed above under Elective Surgery in the VS "Improving Your Character" section. This section assumes that the wound level is not Deadly; the latter requires immediate hospitalization at book costs.

**2. Dealing:** Your Lifestyle will be reflected in the way you look, talk and (maybe) smell. This modifies Negotiation targets with ordinary, non-Black Market types. Street +3 to target, Squatter +2, Low +1, Middle 0, High -1, Luxury -2. If a group is negotiating, the modifier for the worst Lifestyle represented is used. A shower and change to better clothes can eliminate the negative modifiers, but only the actual Lifestyle level provides the positive ones. In VS the above includes dickering with Mr. Johnson. These rules do not affect Fixer Negotiations which are "Black/Grey Market".

**3. Perks and Space:** Don't forget, there's a lot of gear not specified when you start a character: ordinary clothing, bits of personal jewelry, etc. Also, there are modes of transport available (leased cars, tube passes) mentioned in the rules. Even the SINless are assumed to have scammed these (though running the shadows in your Lifestyle-leased car is mondo-foolish). Consult the table, below, for some guidelines.

| Lifestyle | Perks and Space |
|---|---|
| **Street** | Zip. You wear what you've bought. No living space; carry all your gear everywhere, in a shopping cart or your vehicle or whatever. You smell and are undernourished. (See Healing.) |
| **Squatter** | You own a couple of changes of rags. You may have a favourite squat. If you're ever away for more than 24 hours, someone will have cleaned out any possessions left there. Three square meals in a day is a luxury (see Healing). |
| **Low** | See the SRII rules for your "home." No real security except for your rep, and you'd still be cleaned out after a week away. Poor quality clothing and fake/costume personal adornments assumed. |
| **Middle** | See rules. You could entertain and not be ashamed. Still not much security, since you're SINless, but your rep keeps your home inviolate from street types for up to two weeks absence. Average clothes and accoutrements. |
| **High** | People visiting you will be impressed. Your rep and those who watch out for you keep your home and stuff secure from street scum for at least two months in your absence. Good clothes and some valuable add-ons. |
| **Luxury** | Entertaining someone will always favourably impress them with your home (you may be another matter). No ordinary clods would dare raid your place. You sport Tres Chic clothing of this week's style at any time you like plus you have a couple of thousand worth of personal adornments (no, you can't pawn them during an adventure without hurting your rep and dropping yourself to a High Lifestyle). |

No one with the cash will voluntarily live at below a Low lifestyle, unless on a stake-out, on the run, or the equivalent. If you have the nuyen, you must buy at least one month's Low lifestyle at the start of every VS scenario. Refs are encouraged to hose down people with inferior lifestyles as appropriate to the social situation in which they find themselves.

## Character Death and "Wills"

To prevent a certain form of number-crunching and power-gaming (of the unworthy sort), the Virtual Seattle rules regarding passing on stuff to your next character are revised as follows.

If your character dies, you may designate your next character as your "heir." That character may be left:

(1) Up to 50,000¥ of your cash (if you have that much). This may not be used to outfit your new character with Cyberware, Bioware or any goods with a Street Index higher than 1.25. Ordinary stuff only, or keep it as cash-on-hand.
(2) One item of a special/restricted nature. This may have any Street Index ("Billy-Bob wanted you to have Zeke, his Panther Assault Cannon, to remember him by . . .") but may not be magical. If the item has add-on accessories specific to it (e.g. gyro mount for a big gun, or a built-in gun for a vehicle), the complete unit may be passed on. This item or unit may not have a value in excess of 50,000¥ unless you are willing to reduce the cash passed on [see (1)] on a 1-for-1 basis. If you reduce the cash, the maximum value then becomes 100,000¥.

The new character starts out with 0 Good Karma and the usual 1 or 2 Pool Karma. Since the deceased PC bequeathed goods to your new PC, it will be assumed they knew each other, for simplicity.

This should soften the blow of a death without encouraging multiple suicides as a means of beefing up one's characters. (We know most people wouldn't even think of it, but a few did mention the possibility.)

You may not leave money/gear to

other players' characters. Anything left over when you die is presumed left to nonplayer character relatives or to Claudia to help the team carry on; it may not simply be divvied up.

As for looting dead PCs, we leave it to the players' role-playing. Claudia definitely does not approve of it.

## Character Creation Notes

For the magically-aware, just to clarify: you may not begin as an Initiate. You don't even know about Initiation, as yet. There will be a scenario in which an Initiate Group will be discovered, probably by about the 7th to 10th scenario. Save Karma, if you want to be ready. Druids are allowed, but for the sake of game balance we will encourage the REF to consider their special weaknesses: just where is your stone circle located, chummer? The special magical paths of Tir Na Nog are *not* available to player characters at the moment. Sorry, but if you've read the description, they aren't even recommended for uncontrolled introduction into a home campaign.

**For the cyber-active:** you may design a beginning character with both cyberware and bioware, from your 400,000¥ Resources. This is assumed to be stuff scammed, stolen, or black-marketed in your pre-campaign lifetime. Once you begin, you must keep to the rules for "Improving Your Character." For example, bioware is simply not available unless a scenario makes it so. You may *never* buy alpha- or betaware unless the scenario says so. Don't worry, there will be the occasional possibility (as some of you know already, neh?).

## Source Materials Allowed

All sourcebooks published by FASA are considered to be correct, and the background material in them may be used by Virtual Seattle (VS) authors and referees. Ka•Ge material is not authorized for use in VS. Now, to the question which will concern most players: *From which sourcebooks may PCs be equipped during creation and during "character improvement"?*

As it seems there are new sourcebooks and supplements appearing all the time, your friendly VS creators would like some lag time to read the stuff thoroughly in order to evaluate what effect on the campaign each may have. It is our philosophy that not every item, skill, and bit of knowledge will necessarily be available to PCs, starting or otherwise. So, at the time of this article, these are the sourcebooks from which PCs may be equipped (more will be added with time):

- *Shadowrun II* main rules
- *Grimoire* (initiation must be earned in an upcoming scenario)
- *Street Samurai Catalog* (you may not buy alpha- or betaware during creation or improvement; it must be earned during play)
- *ShadowTech*
- *Shadowbeat*
- *London Sourcebook*
- both *NeoAnarchists Guides* (*North America* and *Real Life*)
- *Virtual Realities* (except where an item is overruled or made obsolete by the SRII main rules)
- *Rigger Black Book* (except where an item is overruled or made obsolete by the SRII main rules)

The other Sourcebooks do not have much new gear but may still be used for background, as stated above. The Tir Na Nog magical paths are not allowed for PCs as yet (and may never be). Druids are allowed but discouraged.

**Regarding *Fields of Fire*:** Not yet. We're still scoping this one out for game destroyers. For now, we'll probably release a few bits and pieces in up-coming scenarios. After all, most of this is military-quality gear; it should take a little work to obtain it.

**Finally:** Source material may be implying a direction for official FASA Shadowrun II "history." Virtual Seattle might not follow this future history stringently. If the campaign is to take any major swings, we may also take a poll to seek players' opinions.

## Virtual Seattle Q&A

For those of you who have access to the GEnie information network, the TSR Bulletin Board has a Discussion Topic which Mj and I visit semi-regularly. It's in Category 27, topic 7 (Virtual Seattle). We reply to messages and questions posted there. Our GEnie mail address is: R.HEINTZ1

**Final Notes to Players/Writers:**

- All Virtual Seattle PCs should now be registered with us, Ron and Margaret, so that we can set up a datafile. Forms are available through RPGA® Network HQ or from whoever provides you with your modules.

- We would really like to see submissions for scenarios. They need not be to any set format (RPGA Network or FASA), but consult our writer's guide for tips. The guide is available from Network HQ, or the TSR RoundTable library on GEnie.

**Our address is:**

Ron and Margaret Heintz,
279-9th St., Hanover,
ON, Canada, N4N 1L3

# Virtual Seattle Character Registration

After creating your Virtual Seattle character, fill out this form (please print) and mail it to:
Ron and Margaret Heintz, 279-9th St., Hanover, ON, Canada, N4N 1L3

**Player's Name** _____
(Last) (First)

**Address** _____

_____

_____
city state/prov. zip/postal code

**Character's Name** _____
**Character Profession** _____ **Race** _____
**Totem if Shamanic** _____ **Sex** _____
**Allergy, if Metahuman** _____ **Gives benefit** _____

**Background Picks:** A_____ B_____ C_____ D_____

**Starting Attributes:** BOD___ QUI___ STR___ CHA___ INT___ WIL___

| **Starting Skills** | **Rating** |
|---|---|
| Etiquette (Street) | 3 |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

(**Note:** Include specialization and Concentrations, and see our rules for languages.)

**400,000¥ to spend:** (plus 18,000¥ to be spent on regular gear/lifestyle but not cyber/bioware, etc.) You only need to list cyberware, magic items and any items from the Street Samurai or Shadowtech catalogues. Ordinary gear need not be listed. Just calculate costs carefully per the guidelines and gamebooks. (It's honor system.) Show BOD and ESSENCE costs if appropriate. Show attribute modifiers, if any. Use the back if you need more space.

| **Name and Rating** | **Attribute Modifier** | **Essence** | **Bod** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

***Physical Adepts:*** show Powers, bought with Magic Rating, here.

| **Power** | **Cost** | **Power** | **Cost** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

**Final Attributes:** BOD___ QUI___ STR___ CHA___ INT___ WIL___

# Born To Run

## Virtual Seattle Character Creation

***by Ron & Margaret Heintz***

Before you play in a Virtual Seattle tournament, you'll need your own runner. But if you're in a hurry and want to join in on a session right away, or if you're new to Shadowrun and need an easy way to get started, you can always take one of the pre-generated runners provided in this issue (on pages 15-19).

More likely, you already know how to play Shadowrun and want to create your own shadowrunner to play. In that case, here's how to do it.

### First Off

Have a copy of Shadowrun II handy. Unless otherwise specified below, use Shadowrun II (SRII) rules in all cases.

Although Archetypes are not allowed (because Virtual Seattle uses a variant generation system), any character type is allowed, including Adepts. Your character cannot start the game as an Initiate, however, or use the special Tir Na Nog paths. Read through both the character creation and world view sections before you create your Virtual Seattle character. No Ka•Ge rules are currently allowed in Virtual Seattle play.

However, as always, there is a catch. Dedicated deckers are strongly discouraged. Because deckers are the most number-intensive characters to play and to referee, they can really slow down tournament games with pesky rules. If you wish to play a decker, make sure that you have other skills useful to the group—such as combat, driving or technical—or buy skillwires and be a jack-of-all-trades. The Rigger-Decker is a good combination.

**Note:** Virtual Seattle uses a revised Creation table, below. All Virtual Seattle characters begin with an extra "B" pick in Tech. Tech does not appear on the Table. Assign four other priorities: A, B, C, D, from the Table, below. There is no "E" pick in Virtual Seattle.

Virtual Seattle does not use the "More Metahumans" option.

Once play starts, characters improve using normal SR II rules. Spend Karma as per page 190 to improve your character's attributes and skills as well as allow that character to learn spells and binding magic (pages 190 and 137). Virtual Seattle uses standard SRII rules: Karma may improve attributes up to racial maxima, but no further.

**Skills Freebie:** All characters get the Concentration skill Etiquette (Street) 3. You may allocate starting skill dice to improve Etiquette Concentrations to the usual limit of 6. Buy other Etiquettes up from Rating 1 (you have a "General" Etiquette skill of 1, even though you only use Concentrations).

**Allergies:** Only metahumans may choose an allergy and severity, to get more points (SRII, p. 46). Don't consider this a Freebie: Some adventures happen in the day, and the cops may use teflon/plastic bullets. You pick it, you play it.

### Resources

**Money**

Characters begin with 400,000 nuyen (¥), to spend on anything that their hearts desire except for Buddies, Gangs, or Followers.

Gear can be purchased from any *Shadowrun* source book (including vehicle modifications from the *Black Book*). This includes any military or security gear, for now. Yes, this includes *Shadowtech* Cyber- and Bioware, for now. Savour it, and check out the "Improving Your Character" section (page 9).

You must save enough for one month's Lifestyle of your choice. Minimum is Squatter; you may not start at Street.

Resource money may not be transferred between characters.

**Freebie:** All characters get two free Contacts. Remember that the amount of information your Contacts are willing to give you depends on your character's appropriate Etiquette skill.

Your unused resources allowance, divided by 10, is a bonus to the 18,000¥ that we are giving you on your credstick. Yes, you may spend this 18,000¥ on Gear, too.

### Virtual Seattle Master Character Creation Table

| Priority | Race | Magic | Attributes | Skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Metahuman | Human Mage | 30 | 40 |
| B | Human | Human Adept/Metahuman Mage | 24 | 30 |
| C | Human | Metahuman Adept | 20 | 24 |
| D | Human | No Magic | 17 | 20 |

**Magic Force Points**
All magic capable characters begin with 35 Force points to spend on spells. Buy any spells you like. (Be sure to include a Heal or Treat spell. Healing your samurai is almost as important as dealing with the bad guys.)

Up to 12 of your Force points may also be used to bind magic items purchased with your beginning Resources allowance. No more than two Spell Locks can be purchased during creation. You get four successes for any spell locked on at game pre-start.

## Those Little Extras

**Lifestyle:** at the start of each adventure, you will be charged one month's lifestyle of your choice. If you don't have the nuyen, then welcome to the world of the homeless. Remember Lifestyle factors into regular healing.

**Karma:** You start with 1 Karma point in your personal Karma Pool (2 if you're Metahuman). Team Karma pool is a Freebie in Virtual Seattle. It will always equal the number of players for that session.

**Languages:** Freebie—characters can have points equal to their beginning intelligence that can be spent on languages only. All languages start at 1, no bonus for learning languages within a language group. You also get your Native language at Rating (INT+2), for free. Elf PCs may use points to learn Sperethiel to max Rating 3 before the campaign starts. It is not their native language.

## Pregenerated Runners

On the following pages are pregenerated characters of each major archetype. If you don't want to create your own character from scratch, you can pick one of these runners and make just a few adjustments before you're ready to play.

1) Choose the character you want to play. There are two attribute and two skill lists depending on whether you are playing a human or a metahuman. Be sure to copy them down correctly.

2) If you are playing a Metahuman apply the attribute modifiers found in the chart on page 45 of SRII. Metahumans may also pick an allergy; information on page 46 of SRII.

3) In some cases you are given a choice between skills (example: Bike or Car) and spells (example: Stun Missile, Sleep, Mana Missile). Choose one; you cannot have both.

4) Record the gear common to all characters found below. Choose a vehicle package from Options A, B, or C.

5) Record information onto a character sheet and fill out a registration sheet.

6) Calculate and record your Reaction (if Metahuman; humans are done) and Dice Pools. Reaction equals Quickness plus Intelligence divided by 2. Combat Pool equals Quickness, Intelligence plus Willpower divided by 2. Other Pools (e.g. Magic, Control, Hacking, etc.) are described in the SR II rulebook, pp. 84, 85 and 147.

7) Read the character advancement suggestions for your character. If they contain concepts you are unfamiliar with please ask. These are simply suggestions! Feel free to ignore them: after all; it's now your character and it should advance in the way that you feel most comfortable.

**Gear Common to all Characters**
2 suits of armor clothing 3/0
Armor Jacket 5/3
Boosted Wrist Phone/Screen
Armor Helmet 1/1
Pocket Secretary
Microtransceiver
3 Stim Patch rating 6
3 Tranq Patch rating 10
2 Trauma Patch
Med Kit
Predator II heavy pistol 9M dam
30 APDS heavy pistol rounds
Concealable Holster
Music Playback & 4 albums

**Vehicle Options**
A — Bike (Harley Scorpion)
B — Car (Honda Jackrabbit)
C — no vehicle, but a 18,000¥ credstick

| | Bike | Car |
|---|---|---|
| Handling | 4/5 | 3/8 |
| Speed | 50/150 | 30/90 |
| Body/Armor | 3/3 | 1/0 |
| Signature | 2 | 3 |
| Autopilot | 2 | 1 |
| Firmpoints | 3* | 0 |

* but no weapons

# Primed Runners

## Ready-to-Run Characters for Virtual Seattle

## *Sorcerer Adept*

### Attributes

| | Human | Metahuman |
|---|---|---|
| **Body** | 2 | 2 |
| **Quickness** | 4 | 3 |
| **Strength** | 2 | 2 |
| **Charisma** | 4 | 3 |
| **Intelligence** | 4 | 4 |
| **Willpower** | 4 | 3 |
| **Essence** | 6 | 6 |
| **Magic** | 6 | 6 |
| **Reaction** | 4 + 4d6 | x + 4d6 |

### Skills

| Human | | Metahuman | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sorcery | 6 | Sorcery | 6 |
| Magic Theory | 5 | Negotiation | 4 |
| Bike or Car | 5 | Bike or Car | 4 |
| Etiquette (Street) | 6 | Magic Theory | 4 |
| Firearms | 6 | Etiquette (Street) | 6 |
| Negotiation | 5 | Biotech | 4 |
| Biotech | 5 | Firearms | 5 |
| Stealth | 5 | | |

### Gear

| | |
|---|---|
| Certified Credstick | 18,000¥ |
| Common Equipment & Vehicle | 31,000¥ |
| Power Focus rating 2 | 210,000¥ |
| Spell Lock: Increased Reflexes +3 | 45,000¥ |
| Spell Lock: Improved Invisibility | 45,000¥ |
| Smart Goggles | 3,000¥ |
| Sorcery Library rating 6 | 36,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Talismonger | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: City Official | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Media Producer | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Mr. Johnson | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Street Doc | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Tribal Chief | 5,000¥ |
| **Free Contact:** Yakuza Boss | |
| **Free Contact:** Metahuman Rights Activist | |

Contact descriptions appear in *Shadowrun II,* pp. 200–213.

### Spell List

| Spell | Force | Target | Drain | Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased Reflexes +3 | 6 | Reaction x2 | (f/2)D | Sustained |
| Improved Invisibilty | 6 | 4 | (f/2)+1M | Sustained |
| Treat | 5 | 8–Essence | (f/2)w.l. | Permanent |
| Mana Missile (M dam) | 6 | Willpower | (f/2)M | Instant |
| Stun Missile (M dam) | 6 | Willpower | (f/2)-1M | Instant |
| Sleep (M dam) | 6 | Willpower | (f/2)-1S | Instant |

**Suggested character advancement:** You're a magic-capable character, so you'll never have enough karma. Fortunately, you have some good magical and non-magical skills and your attributes aren't sickly. However, you'll likely be on the lookout for more spells. Remember, the only magic you can do is spellcasting. Conjuring spirits, elementals or watchers is beyond your capabilities. You cannot use astral projection and sight.

*Virtual Seattle illustrations courtesy of FASA Corporation*

# Mage or Shaman

## Attributes

| | Human | Metahuman |
|---|---|---|
| **Body** | 2 | 2 |
| **Quickness** | 4 | 3 |
| **Strength** | 2 | 2 |
| **Charisma** | 4 | 3 |
| **Intelligence** | 4 | 4 |
| **Willpower** | 4 | 3 |
| **Essence** | 6 | 6 |
| **Magic** | 6 | 6 |
| **Reaction** | 4 + 4d6 | x + 4d6 |

## Skills

| Human | | Metahuman | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sorcery | 6 | Sorcery | 6 |
| Conjuring | 4 | Conjuring | 4 |
| Bike or Car | 4 | Bike or Car | 4 |
| Magic Theory | 4 | Magic Theory | 4 |
| Etiquette (Street) | 6 | Etiquette (Street) | 6 |
| Biotech | 4 | Firearms | 3 |
| Firearms | 5 | | |

## Gear

| | |
|---|---|
| Certified Credstick | 18,000¥ |
| Common Equipment & Vehicle | 31,000¥ |
| Power Focus rating 2 | 210,000¥ |
| Spell Lock: Increased Reflexes +3 | 45,000¥ |
| Spell Lock: Improved Invisibility | 45,000¥ |
| Smart Goggles | 3,000¥ |
| Sorcery Library rating 6 | 36,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Talismonger | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: City Official | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Media Producer | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Mr. Johnson | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Street Doc | 5,000¥ |
| Extra Contact: Tribal Chief | 5,000¥ |
| **Free Contact:** Yakuza Boss | |
| **Free Contact:** Metahuman Rights Activist | |

Contact descriptions appear in *Shadowrun II,* pp. 200–213.

## Spell List

| Spell | Force | Target | Drain | Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased Reflexes +3 | 6 | Reaction x2 | (f/2)D | Sustained |
| Improved Invisibilty | 6 | 4 | (f/2) + 1M | Sustained |
| Treat | 5 | 8–Essence | (f/2)w.l. | Permanant |
| Mana Missile (M dam) | 6 | Willpower | (f/2)M | Instant |
| Stun Missile (M dam) | 6 | Willpower | (f/2) – 1M | Instant |
| Sleep (M dam) | 6 | Willpower | (f/2) –1S | Instant |

**Suggested character advancement:** You're a magic-capable character, so you'll never have enough karma. Fortunately you have some good magical and non-magical skills and your attributes aren't sickly. However, you'll likely be on the lookout for more spells. If you are a shaman, look through SRII pgs. 118-122 to pick a totem and remember to apply all modifiers when you cast spells or summon spirits.

# Physical Adept

## Attributes

| | Human | Metahuman |
|---|---|---|
| **Body** | 5 | 4 |
| **Quickness** | 5 | 4 |
| **Strength** | 5 | 4 |
| **Charisma** | 5 | 4 |
| **Intelligence** | 5 | 4 |
| **Willpower** | 5 | 4 |
| **Essence** | 6 | 6 |
| **Magic** | 6 | 6 |
| **Reaction** | 4 + 2d6 | x + 2d6 |

## Skills

| Human | | Metahuman | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armed Combat | 6 | Armed Combat | 5 |
| Bike or Car | 4 | Bike or Car | 3 |
| Projectile | 6 | Projectile | 5 |
| Etiquette (Street) | 6 | Etiquette (Street) | 5 |
| Firearms | 5 | Firearms | 5 |

## Gear

| | |
|---|---|
| Certified Credstick | 4,000¥ |
| Common Equipment & Vehicle | 31,000¥ |
| Smart Goggles | 3,000¥ |
| +1 reach Weapon Focus rating 2 * | 380,000¥ |
| **Free Contact:** Media Producer | |
| **Free Contact:** Mr. Johnson | |

*Example: sword, katana, axe, club
Contact descriptions appear in *Shadowrun II*, pp. 200–213.

## Powers

| | Rank | Cost |
|---|---|---|
| Increased Reaction | 1 | 1 |
| Astral Perception | | 2 |
| Combat Sense | 2 | 3 |

(Note that extra dice in your Combat Pool are usable also for Surprise Tests.)

**Suggested character advancement:** As a physical adept you can never have your attributes high enough: your goal should be to have a body at the peak of your racial capabilities. You might want to expand your skills, however, or concentrate on improving the ones you have. The powers gained by being a physical adept make you a bit faster and tougher in a fight while your astral perception and your magical weapon focus make you a dangerous threat to spirits and elementals (as well as Projecting magicians).

# Samurai

## Attributes

| | Human | Metahuman |
|---|---|---|
| **Body** | 5 | 4 |
| **Quickness** | 5 (9) | 4 (8) |
| **Strength** | 5 (9) | 4 (8) |
| **Charisma** | 5 | 4 |
| **Intelligence** | 5 | 4 |
| **Willpower** | 5 | 4 |
| **Essence** | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| **Magic** | — | — |
| **Reaction** | 7 (11) + 3d6 | x (x+4) + 3d6 |

## Skills

| Human | | Metahuman | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Firearms | 6 | Firearms | 5 |
| Unarmed Combat | 6 | Unarmed Combat | 5 |
| Bike or Car | 4 | Bike or Car | 3 |
| Throwing | 4 | Throwing | 3 |
| Etiquette (Street) | 6 | Etiquette (Street) | 5 |
| Interrogation | 3 | Interrogation | 3 |
| Stealth | 4 | Stealth | 3 |

## Gear

| | |
|---|---|
| Certified Credstick | 18,000¥ |
| Common Equipment & Vehicle | 31,000¥ |
| Wired Reflexes +2 | 165,000¥ |
| Cybereyes with Thermo, Flare Comp., Low Light | 13,000¥ |
| Smartgun Link | 2,500¥ |
| Muscle Augmentation rating 4 | 180,000¥ |
| Bug Scanner rating 7 | 3,500¥ |
| Extra Contact: Yakuza Boss | 5,000¥ |
| **Free Contact:** Troll Bouncer | |
| **Free Contact:** Street Doc | |

Contact descriptions appear in *Shadowrun II,* pp. 200–213.

**Suggested character advancement:** While your attributes are as high as a physical adept's, you far surpass them when it comes to raw skills. Your wired reflexes are your greatest edge, allowing you to move twice as fast as the everyman on the street.

# Rigger or Rigger/Decker

## Attributes

| | Human | Metahuman |
|---|---|---|
| **Body** | 4 | 3 |
| **Quickness** | 4 | 4 |
| **Strength** | 4 | 3 |
| **Charisma** | 4 | 3 |
| **Intelligence** | 4 | 4 |
| **Willpower** | 4 | 3 |
| **Essence** | .4 | .4 |
| **Magic** | — | — |
| **Reaction** | 4 + 1d6 | x + 1d6 |

**Note:** Character has 4d6 for Initiative when using a Rigged vehicle or cybered Remote Deck, due to Vehicle Control Rig rating 3. VCR also adds to REA score, only when Rigging.

## Skills

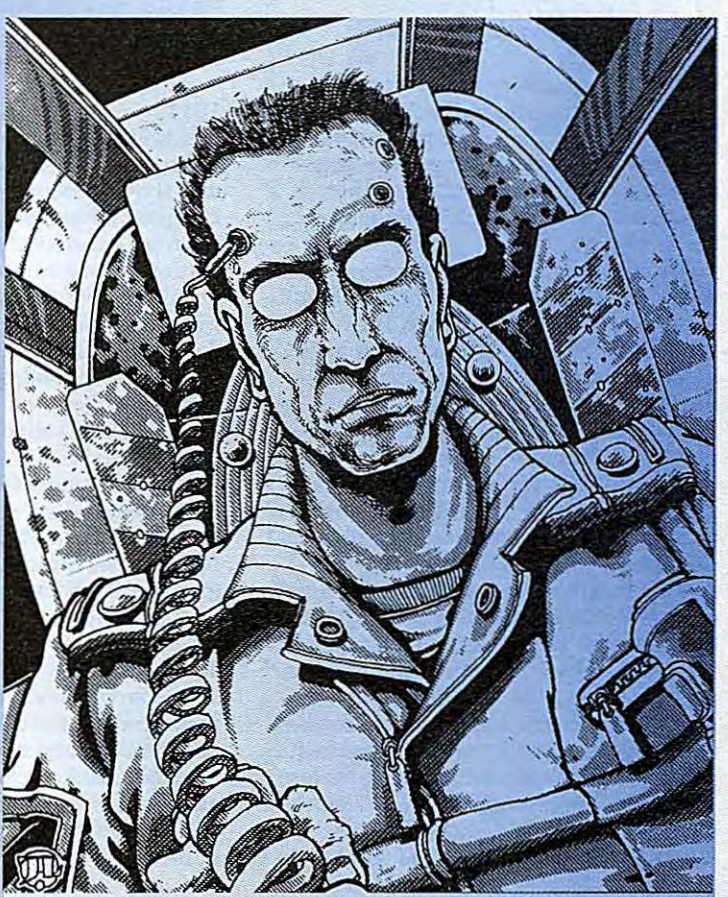
| Human | | Metahuman | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bike or Car | 6 | Bike or Car | 6 |
| Rotor or Fixed | 6 | Rotor or Fixed | 6 |
| Computer or Demolition | 6 | Computer or Demolition | 6 |
| Firearms or Gunnery | 6 | Firearms or Gunnery | 6 |
| Etiquette (Street) | 6 | Etiquette (Street) | 6 |
| Negotiation | 6 | Negotiation | 3 |
| Electronics | 5 | Biotech | 2 |

## Gear

| | |
|---|---|
| Certified Credstick | 18,000¥ |
| Common Equipment & Vehicle | 31,000¥ |
| Vehicle Control Rig rating 3 | 300,000¥ |
| Skillwires Plus rating 3 | 45,000¥ |
| Softlink rating 4 | 8,000¥ |
| Smart Goggles | 3,000¥ |
| Skillsoft 3: Armed Combat | 3,000¥ |
| Skillsoft 3: Corporate Etiquette | 3,000¥ |
| Skillsoft 3: Stealth | 3,000¥ |
| Linguasoft 6: Japanese | 1,800¥ |
| Linguasoft 6: Aztlan | 1,800¥ |
| One kilo plastic explosive Compound XII | 200¥ |
| Two timer detonators | 200¥ |

**Free Contact:** Mechanic
**Free Contact:** Mr. Johnson

Contact descriptions appear in *Shadowrun II*, pp. 200–213.



**Suggested character advancement:** As a rigger or as a rigger/decker you live for the cyberspace world of controlling a vehicle or a computer system by thought alone. Although you have decent attributes and skills to make you useful outside cyberspace, you know that your true strength is behind the wheel or remote deck. Instead of saving your karma like most characters you'll be saving your pennies to purchase the toys that make life worth living.

Special thanks to Ron and Margaret Heintz of Hanover, Ontario, for their creative development of Virtural Seattle, and to Lou Prosperi and the wonderful artists of FASA Corporation for the cool *Shadowrun* illustrations in this issue.

Be sure to check out the Virtual Seattle event, *Sweet Dreams* by Wes Nicholson, at this year's GEN CON® Game Fair! It runs in slots 1,6, 9, and 11.

–Duane

# Gothic Heroes

## Heroes of the Great American Pastime

***By William W. Connors***

*Welcome to the third in a series of biographies detailing the most important people, fictional and actual, of Gothic Earth, the setting for the* Masque of the Red Death *campaign. This month, we indulge the personal passions of the author and examine the heroes of professional baseball.*

Baseball is very much a part of American life in the 1890s. Every city, every small town, every village has its own team. Barnstorming teams, some professional, many not, crisscross the country offering to play the local boys.

The greatest players of the day, including "Cap" Anson, "King" Kelly, and Tommy McCarthy and Hugh Duffy, Boston's "Heavenly Twins," are household names. Every boy dreams of playing for teams like the Boston Beaneaters, the Pittsburgh Alleghenies, and the Baltimore Orioles.

Baseball first turned professional in 1869, when Harry Wright and a consortium of Ohio businessmen backed the Cincinnati Red Stockings. Wright's British-born father, Sam, was one of the most famous cricketers of his day, but his fame was all but forgotten in the wake of his son's accomplishments. In their first year, the Red Stockings won 65 games and lost none. Indeed, the Red Stockings went on to win 92 consecutive games before being dealt their first loss.

The great popularity of the national pastime in this era means that just about any character from the United States will know at least a little something about the game. With that in mind, we present the following summary of baseball in the century's final decade.

### Baseball in the 1890s

**1890**
This was the inaugural year for the ill-fated Players' League. Owned and operated in cooperation with the players themselves, it represented a great change in the game as a business.

After a noble campaign, the Players' League pennant went to Boston in 1890. Led by great players like .345-hitting Dan Brothers, Billy Nash, and King Kelly, Boston fans were elated.

The National League, which was greatly weakened by players defecting to the rival Players' League, was easily dominated by Brooklyn.

The American Association, weakened even more than the National League, was not even considered a "major league." As teams folded left and right, Boston hung on to win the pennant.

**1891**
A tragic year for baseball, 1891 saw the collapse of the American Association and the assassination of the Players' League by National League owners. As the only surviving "major League," the National League became the focus of attention for fans everywhere. Anchored by the amazing infield of Tom Tucker, Joe Quinn, Billy Nash, and Herman Long, Boston walked away with the pennant.

**1892**
Overcoming even Cleveland's amazing Cy Young, Boston managed both to win the pennant and become the first National League team to win 100 games, compiling a record of 102 wins and 48 losses.

**1893**
With the pitcher's mound moved to its modern distance of 60 feet 6 inches, baseball entered an era of great offensive play. Boston claimed its third straight pennant, batting an incredible .290 and averaging nearly 7 runs per game.

**1894**
Following on their success in 1893, Boston players continued to hammer National League pitchers. While they batted .331 as a team and scored just over 8 runs a game, however, they still finished second to the Baltimore Orioles. Riding a June charge to the pennant, the Orioles overcame a fragmented pitching staff to edge out Boston in the last weeks of the season.

**1895**
Early in 1895, Baltimore floundered due to pitching problems. Once again, however, they managed a late season rally. Thanks to the timely return of an injured Sadie McMahon, who went 10–4 and managed to hold opposing teams to under 3 runs a game down the stretch, the Orioles slipped past Cleveland and claimed the pennant.

**1896**
Getting off to a slow start once again, Baltimore ignited in the second half of the season. Led by .398–hitting "Dirty" Jack Doyle and pitchers Billy Hoffer and George Hemming, they left Cleveland and Cy Young 9 games back to win their third consecutive pennant.

**1897**
Having spent the last three seasons rebuilding itself, Boston returned to prominence with a vengeance in 1897. Going an incredible 17–1 in July, the Boston Beaneaters caught Baltimore and the two teams would battle for first place throughout the rest of the season. In the end, it came down to a single game between the rivals, which Boston won 19 to 10.

**1898**
Kid Nichols, Boston's ace pitcher for the last few years, managed a 29–12 record in 1898 as the Beaneaters defeated Baltimore by 6 games in the series. As a team, Boston managed to hit .290, an average surpassed only by Baltimore, which batted .302 in their failed bid for the pennant.

**1899**
Seeing that the country's economic problems were certain to have a tragic effect on many of baseball's smaller franchises, businessman Ned Hanlon bought the faltering Orioles and moved the stars of Baltimore to his other team in Brooklyn. With this powerhouse, which featured some of baseball's most popular players, Brooklyn easily won the pennant by 8 games over the second place Boston Beaneaters.

## Adrian Constantine Anson

**Alignment:** Lawful Good
**Class:** Tradesman
**Kit:** Athlete
**XP Level:** 10

**Strength:** 16
**Dexterity:** 16
**Constitution:** 15
**Intelligence:** 14
**Wisdom:** 13
**Charisma:** 15

**Armor Class:** 8
**Hit Points:** 50
**THAC0:** 16
**No. of Attacks:** 1

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Club, shotgun, repeating rifle, army pistol, derringer

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Athletics—baseball (18), endurance (15), hunting (13), running (15), swimming (16), lang: English (native), sensitivity: unique form (8)

**Background**
Without a doubt the greatest player in the history of professional baseball, Cap Anson was born in a log cabin in Iowa. He has sometimes been called the "Marshalltown Infant" and took great pride in being the first white child born in that part of the country.

From 1871 to '75, Anson played ball for the American Association teams in both Rockford and Philadelphia. During his four years in that league, he batted .352 and was noted for both his power and defensive skills.

Anson's career and reputation truly began to blossom when he left the American Association. Indeed, it is doubtful that any player will ever be as strongly identified with his team as Cap Anson is with the Chicago White Stockings. Ever since Anson retired as manager of the White Stockings in 1897, the public and press have referred to the team as the "Orphans."

Anson joined the White Stockings in 1876, their first year in the National League. Over the course of the next 22 years, he batted .334 and played every position on the field, although he is best known as a first baseman.

Anson's career is marked by greatness. He won the National League batting title three times, hitting .396 in 1879, .399 in 1881, and .344 in 1888. From 1880 to '86, Anson guided his team to no fewer than five pennants. By the time he retired, he had hit over .300 in no fewer than 20 seasons, including a .302 average in his final year.

With a career that spans three decades, Anson has managed to acquire a series of nicknames. During his early years in baseball, he was known as "Baby" because of his habit of complaining to umpires about calls that went against him. Later on, when he became the captain of the White Stockings, he garnered the name by which he is perhaps best known. In the years leading up to his retirement from baseball in 1898, he came to be called "Pop."

**Role-Playing**
Cap Anson is both a determined competitor and a knowledgeable ballplayer. He never shies away from a challenge or admits defeat. Indeed, the more difficult the situation, the more resolute Anson becomes.

Sadly, this great man is marked with as strong a streak of racism as one will find in any human being. On several occasions, he made it clear that neither he nor any player he managed would participate in anything, even baseball, if it involved blacks.

**Forbidden Lore**
Cap Anson is a superstitious man. What he does not realize is that he is himself gifted with a minor psychic ability akin to the Sixth Sense proficiency. Indeed, it is his latent sensitivity to the thoughts of both the pitcher and catcher that makes him such a dangerous hitter.

## Denton True Young

**Alignment:** Lawful Good
**Class:** Tradesman
**Kit:** Athlete
**XP Level:** 7

**Strength:** 15
**Dexterity:** 17
**Constitution:** 15
**Intelligence:** 10
**Wisdom:** 12
**Charisma:** 10

**Armor Class:** 7
**Hit Points:** 35
**THAC0:** 17
**No. of Attacks:** 1

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Club, derringer, rock (thrown), shotgun

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Athletics—baseball (18), agriculture (10), endurance (15), hunting (13), running (15), lang: English (native).

**Background**
Denton True Young appeared in his first professional baseball game on August 8, 1890. At the age of 23, he was taken by his teammates to be nothing more than an out-of-place country boy from the farms of Ohio. They took to calling him Cy, short for the insulting "Cyris." Before long, they would swear that Cy was for the Cyclone that his blazing pitches brought to mind.

In his debut, he held the great Cap Anson and his Chicago White Stockings

to a mere 3 hits and guided the Cleveland Spiders to an 8–1 win. After the game, Anson tried to buy Young's contract from Cleveland's manager, but his offer was laughingly rejected.

Throughout the decade of the 1890s, Young's blazing fastball, precision control, and deadly curve baffled batters throughout baseball. He managed to hold opposing teams to only 3.05 runs per game and averaged a record of 27 and 15 from his debut to the turn of the century. His performance continued to improve with each passing year, and there seems to be no reason why his second decade in baseball shouldn't be even better than his first.

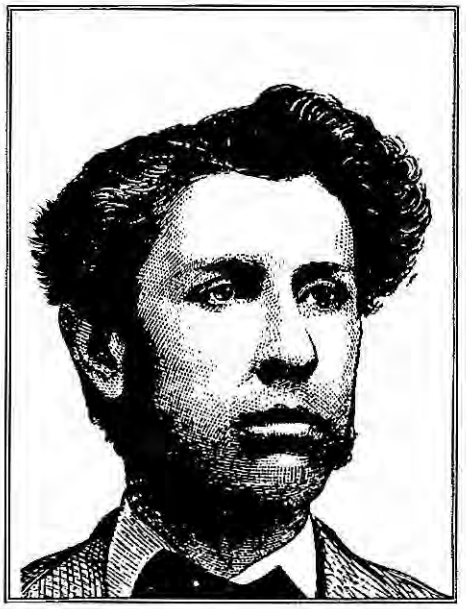
Following the 1898 season, Young—. Along with many other star players—was transferred to St. Louis, a team that also belonged to Cleveland owner Frank Robinson. While this gave fans in St. Louis something to cheer about, it left Cleveland with a decimated team that was quickly boycotted by disappointed fans. As Young led St. Louis into serious competition, the 1899 Cleveland Spiders compiled an all-time-worst record of 20 wins and 134 losses.

**Role Playing**
Cy Young still has something of the country boy in him, despite his success. He knows that he is a fine ballplayer, but will be the first to admit that others are as good as or even better than he. He is more than a little uncomfortable with the attention that his fame has brought him, both with the press and the public, but does his best to be a role model and a good teammate. Young is adamant about keeping his commitments and fulfilling his responsibilities.

**Forbidden Lore**
As a child, Denton Young enjoyed exploring the woodlands that surrounded his Ohio home. These walks often kept him out until well after sunset, causing his parents no end of grief.

One night, as he was hurrying to return home, Young came across his grandfather kneeling in a clearing. He was about to speak to him when he saw the old man throw back his head and howl with rage. For the next few minutes, the terrified boy watched as his grandfather slowly transformed into a great wolf.

Young turned and fled, never to mention the incident to anyone. In the back of his mind, however, he has always feared that his grandfather's affliction might prove to be hereditary.



## Wee Willie Keeler

**Alignment:** Lawful Good
**Class:** Tradesman
**Kit:** Athlete
**XP Level:** 9

**Strength:** 14
**Dexterity:** 16
**Constitution:** 15
**Intelligence:** 13
**Wisdom:** 12
**Charisma:** 12

**Armor Class:** 8
**Hit Points:** 40
**THAC0:** 16
**No. of Attacks:** 1

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Club, derringer, shotgun, navy pistol

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Athletics—Baseball (18), endurance (15), pugilism (+2), running (15), lang: English (native)

**Background**
Born in Brooklyn, Willie Keeler certainly lives up to his colorful nickname. Standing just under 5′5″ and weighing only 140 pounds, he is one of the smallest men ever to play in the National League.

As might be expected, Keeler's slight stature forced him to find other ways of competing with baseball's power hitters. He did this with excellent defensive skills in right field, good speed on the basepaths, and by becoming one of the best contact hitters the game has ever known. When asked what the key to his success is, Keeler responds "keep your eye clear and hit 'em where they ain't."

As the lead-off hitter for the Baltimore Orioles, Keeler routinely scores 100 or more runs in a season. Indeed, he has crossed the plate a record 140+ times in a single season. This, combined with his ability to steal as many as 67 bases a year, makes him one of the game's most skilled baserunners.

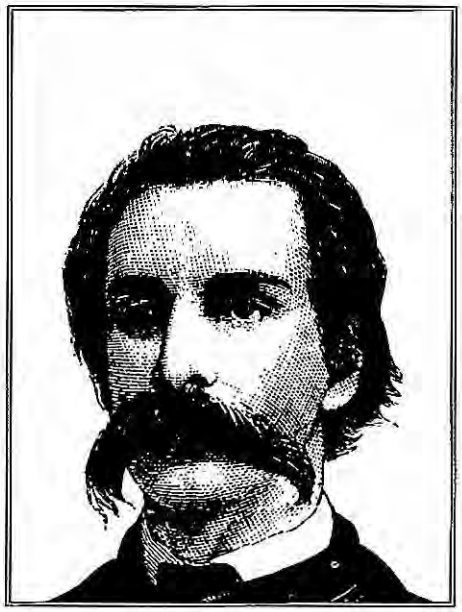
It is at the plate, however, that Keeler best shows his stuff. Employing the lightest bat in baseball and choking up almost halfway, he has proved himself a match for even the swiftest fastball. Keeler's chopping swing provides almost no power, but gives him the ability to guide the ball past infielders or behind stealing runners.

In 1897 and '98, Keeler easily won the National League batting championships. In the former season he managed to bat a staggering .432 and in the latter he averaged .379. As the century draws to a close, Keeler holds the record for most consecutive games with at least one base hit, having managed this feat 44 times in the 1897 season.

**Role Playing**
Wee Willie Keeler has always felt the need to prove himself. Because of his diminutive stature, he has constantly suffered abuse from other players. As a member of John McGraw's Baltimore Orioles, however, he appears to have found himself a home.

**Forbidden Lore**
As a boy in Brooklyn, Keeler and his friends made a habit of playing in abandoned buildings. One day, he came across an unusual ceremony being performed by hooded men in a disused warehouse. Curious at first, he watched as they went through what could only be an arcane ritual. As their dark rite continued, Keeler became more and more frightened.

Finally, the hooded men finished their work and turned to go. Keeler noticed with horror that their hands, the only exposed parts of their bodies, were not human, but covered with reptilian scales. Although he saw no more of these strange creatures, their memory haunts him to this day in the form of nightmares and occasional feelings of crushing dread.



## Ed Delahanty

| | |
|---|---|
| **Alignment:** | Lawful Good |
| **Class:** | Tradesman |
| **Kit:** | Athlete |
| **XP Level:** | 9 |
| **Strength:** | 17 |
| **Dexterity:** | 14 |
| **Constitution:** | 16 |
| **Intelligence:** | 10 |
| **Wisdom:** | 10 |
| **Charisma:** | 12 |
| **Armor Class:** | 10 |
| **Hit Points:** | 45 |
| **THAC0:** | 16 |
| **No. of Attacks:** | 1 |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Club, derringer, shotgun, army pistol, repeating rifle

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Athletics—baseball (18), endurance (15), pugilism (+3), running (15), lang: English (native).

**Background**
The hard-drinking Ed Delahanty is, without a doubt, the premier power hitter in baseball today. Often known as "Big Ed," he stands 6'2" tall and weighs a muscular 180 pounds.

Delahanty comes from a large family in which the game of baseball was an integral part of daily life. He is but one of five brothers, all of whom eventually found themselves playing professional baseball in the National League.

Playing both left field and first base for Philadelphia, the imposing Delahanty batted .354 for the decade of the 1890s, twice topping the .400 mark. On the average he drove in 131 runs, banged 10 home runs, and managed 226 hits. He is routinely among the National League leaders in doubles and triples.

**Author's Note:** By modern standards, Delahanty's 10–15 home-run seasons are nothing special. In the 1890s, however, the composition of the ball and other differences in the game made home runs very rare. Among the other players, Delahanty's power is considered nothing short of phenomenal.

**Role-Playing**
Delahanty's power at the plate is marred by his weakness for liquor off the field. Very much a blustering bully, Philadelphia's "Big Ed" is constantly in trouble with managers and owners.

As is often the case, however, Delahanty's outside personality contrasts greatly with his true self. Inside, the Philadelphia slugger is a worried, frightened man.

**Forbidden Lore**
Delahanty is a driven, haunted man. Deep in his heart, he knows that there is a great evil in the world and that he—indeed all of mankind—is helpless before it. When not occupied with the game he loves, Delahanty finds escape from his nagging fears in the embrace of alcohol.

The onset of Delahanty's fears dates back to his teenage years. Shortly after he turned 16, a close friend invited him to attend a seance one night. Thinking nothing of it (for spiritualism was all the rage at the time) Delahanty accepted.

What transpired that evening is not known. For his part, Delahanty will say nothing of the matter. Ever since that time, however, he has been a frightened, nervous man.

## Other Major Figures

**Albert Spalding:** Although a fine player in his own right, Spalding was an outstanding businessman. He stopped playing baseball at the age of 26 to found his own sporting goods company. As an advisor and major supplier of equipment to the National League, Spalding quickly became a millionaire. Spalding used his influence to help crush the Players' League in the early 1890s.

**John Montgomery Ward:** As both a player and an activist for players' rights, the highly educated Monte Ward has been an important factor in the development of baseball. Ward retired from baseball in 1888 and turned to the practice of law.

**Ned Hanlon:** There can be no doubt that Ned Hanlon will go down in history as one of baseball's greatest managers. As the skipper of the Baltimore Orioles, he crafted a team that dominated the National League in the 1890s.

**Billy Hamilton:** "Sliding" Billy Hamilton is one of the best leadoff men and base stealers in baseball. He split the 1890s between Philadelphia and Boston, helping the latter club to reclaim the pennant after three consecutive championships went to Baltimore.

**Amos Rusie:** Known as the "Hoosier Thunderbolt," Amos Rusie is a workhorse pitcher noted for his speed and his wildness. He routinely leads the National League in walks, but still manages a winning record due to his overpowering fastball.

**Lizzie Arlington:** This famous lady pitcher led her barnstorming Bloomer Girls on annual tours of the United States. Throughout the 1890s, they managed a record of 731 wins and 646 losses, better than many professional franchises could claim.

**Mike "King" Kelly:** One of the most devious and underhanded players in the history of baseball, King Kelly has caused the National League to clarify and rewrite many of its rules in an effort to prevent his abuses. Kelly once said "show me a boy who doesn't participate in base ball and I will show you a weak, sickly, hot-house plant, who will feel sorry ... that he was ever born."

**John McGraw:** Described as having a "face like a fist," third baseman John McGraw is without a doubt the most foul mouthed, abusive man ever to play baseball. Although not a big man, he is as fierce a competitor as one will find. In 1894, McGraw and an opposing player got into a fist fight. The brawl spread to the benches and then the stands. In the ensuing riot, the ballpark and 170 other buildings went up in flames.

*In our next installment, we'll turn away from athletes to artisans. The 1890s is a time of changes in the perception of art that rival those of the renaissance itself. From Cezanne to Monet and Gauguin to Pissarro, these visionaries are reshaping the art world by sharing their dreams, and sometimes their nightmares, with the citizens of Gothic Earth.*

❑

# Weasel Games

## The New "Deckade"

***by Lester Smith***

A few years ago, shortly after I began working full-time in the game industry, an older friend—a college professor who had been something of a mentor to me—asked, with all the best intentions, I'm certain, "Are you sure the hobby isn't just a fad?" From his perspective, role-playing had been around for less than two decades, and he wasn't aware of wargaming's long history, so neither seemed to him a safe bet for me to be supporting a family of six upon.

If the truth be told, I had already spent a year wrestling with that very question. (And with the merits of making any sort of entertainment a career: a puritanical, blue-collar upbringing had hammered into me a sense of "America's shameful fixation on fun" and the necessity for "sweat of the brow" toil, so it was a while before I could fully take pride in a creative job providing people with escapism in games. I'm much better now, thank you.)

But by the time my mentor asked his question, I had become confident of my new career choice, and I reminded him that several silent-movie stars had declined roles in the first "talkies" because they thought the addition of sound was just a fad. Boy, were they wrong. On the other hand, while sound in film was to become the wave of the future, and color was soon to become just as much a necessity, 3D never really caught on, despite some truly impressive effects.

The point is that it is difficult to predict what will be a fad and what will soon be taken for granted. Twenty years ago, hard-core wargamers scoffed at the advent of role-playing. But presently, both paper and computer games are dominated by role-playing products, and die-hard wargames are growing harder and harder to find. Currently, many people see a parallel in the advent of collectible card games, predicting that role-playing is the new dinosaur, doomed to follow wargaming into obscurity. Others view the collectible genre as nothing but a fad, soon to fade as consumers grow tired of buying yet another booster set for their collections.

I'm somewhere in the middle. Shortly after *Magic: The Gathering* was first released, I received a couple of review copies, played with them, and (as I've said elsewhere in print) wasn't particularly impressed. (And boy, do I feel like a minority of one.) But I've become thoroughly addicted to *Jyhad*,™ and I very much enjoy the SPELLFIRE™ game (my editing it was on a volunteer basis) and the new BLOOD WARS™ game, as well as a few others. My cool reception of *Magic: The Gathering* was something of a fluke, then, and not an indictment of deck-building games as a whole.

Having established my credentials, then, as neither a whole-hearted card-game-aholic nor a total scoffer at the new genre, I think it significant for me to point out that collectible card games provide gamers with several new facets of weaselly play. That fact alone argues a long life for the genre, given just how many weasel gamers there are in existence. Let's look at a few of those facets.

**Even the dickering to trade cards between games can be seen as competitive ...**

Weasel gaming is based, at its heart, on competition. The thrill of stabbing someone in the back—arguably the signature aspect of weasel games—is not in the treachery itself, but in the necessity for it, and in the timing. Put more simply, in weasel games, back-stabbing is a necessity for survival first, and ultimately for supremacy. The player who best recognizes the moment for that necessity and who best executes it is the player who will end up atop the heap.

Collectible card games are highly competitive by nature; just take a look at any of them currently in existence. But these games add a new level of competition in their very collectibility. The player who collects the most and best cards typically has a distinct advantage over others with fewer and weaker ones. Sure, as with trading cards, people are driven to collect them to gain a full set, as well, but let's not underestimate the impetus to collect in order to build a "killer" deck. Even the dickering to trade cards between games can be seen as competitive in nature, as collectors vie for the best or fullest collection at the least cost to themselves. Only the foolish, or the supremely confident, trade cards without thought of how they are strengthening their opponents' decks.

But one problem with trading is that it gives your soon-to-be-opponents a peek into your collection. Not only do they know what cards you have gained from them, by noting what cards you offer in trade they learn something of the cards you hold, and certainly what you think you can spare. This mitigates against one important tactic that collectible games allow for more fully than most other games: the element of surprise.

In most games, play begins with everyone fully aware of the resources everyone else has. But because players build their own decks in collectible card games, they can come to the table with their decks a complete mystery to the other players. That can be a critical tactic. As long as no one else knows what theme you have built into your deck, they must be hesitant about how they play, always prepared for some surprise.

But if you let them know ahead of time the basic strategies built into your deck, there is no sense of mystery to keep them off balance. And, of course, if everyone knows roughly how many cards are in your collection, and if, through trading with you, they have a good idea of exactly what cards you own, it becomes difficult for you to project that unnerving sense of mystery.

The only time it actually becomes an advantage to let everyone else know the theme of the deck you are playing is if that deck has consistently beaten all others. Then your opponents will be daunted by the deck's reputation.

Next time, we'll discuss some strategies for building such a reputation. ⌟

# The Living Galaxy

## Let an Adventure Driver Take Your Campaign Controls

***by Roger E. Moore***

Every month, this column attempts to show ways in which a Game Master can expand any science-fiction role-playing campaign with a little creative tinkering. Sooner or later, you're going to run out of official adventures with pretty covers and will have to wing it to keep your players happy and your campaign alive. With a little confidence, forethought, and (yes) hard work, you can take your campaign far beyond any "official" boundaries into exciting realms no one else ever dreamed of.

To reach those new realms, you may have to step back from your campaign and look at its bare bones, the basic assumptions and elements that hold the setting and adventures together. The most important element in maintaining a long-playing role-playing campaign is (in my opinion, anyway) a wealth of adventure drivers.

### Drive On!

An adventure driver is any conflict that produces one or more adventures as a consequence. This concept is easy to grasp and apply. In fact, you could say that an adventure driver is created wherever two or more beings decide that they don't like or trust each other. Bingo!—plots spin off like crazy from this conflict.

In many old DC Comics, for instance, Lex Luthor's long-running feud with the Man of Steel was the adventure driver. In Lucasfilm's Star Wars movies, the war between the tyrannical Empire and the freedom-loving Rebels was the main driver. In the old "Star Trek" TV show, intense rivalry between the Federation and the Klingons drove many episodes, and the U.S.S. *Enterprise's* primary mission to seek out new life and new civilizations drove many others, as "first contact" between two cultures always produces tension and conflict.

It should be pointed out that a good adventure driver is not eliminated by the actions of the player characters during a single adventure. If Superman had put Lex Luthor in prison for good after the latter's first crime, there would have been very few story lines in those comics (or at least few consistent and developing ones). However, Luthor kept escaping to cause more trouble, which kept the tension and the adventures going. The rivalry between the Federation and the Klingons was not resolved for many years in "Star Trek" (if it ever was), and the U.S.S. *Enterprise's* mission was to last five years—a nice, long time to generate lots of adventures while meeting lots of odd, suspicious aliens.

More than one adventure driver, great or small, can and should be in effect in a science-fiction campaign at any time. In a typical SF universe, international warfare, civil rebellions, corporate conflicts, criminal activities, acts of revenge, economic troubles, and voyages of discovery could all occur at once in different places, producing an unimaginably huge warehouse of great adventures.

Indeed, more than one adventure driver could easily be found on a single planet or in a single nation. Consider this: From the point of view of an espionage agent or elite-forces soldier, how many adventure drivers are there on Earth today? How many different types of conflicts can you find in a typical week's reading of the evening news-paper? Mack Bolan, James Bond, Doc Savage, and Tarzan never lacked for new quests, and they never left the bonds of Earth (at least, not for long).

A good GM can also link several adventure drivers into a *network* or *hierarchy,* creating a realistic and consistent background of events against which heroic quests are played out. In a network, the adventure drivers are not directly related, but they interact to produce important situations that intensify the adventures (in the way that social anxiety over economic troubles can combine with the easy availability of illegal drugs to produce a walloping drug-abuse problem and an international "drug war" against cocaine and heroin cartels). In a hierarchy, one overriding conflict encompasses and produces a whole subset of smaller conflicts (in the way that a global war covers many national and personal rivalries, perhaps creating new rivalries as well).

What good is it to consider adventure drivers? Well, here's an example: A few years ago, I received a review copy of a new (and by now completely forgotten) SFRPG that took place on a future Earth. The designer had taken great pains to make the world a better, brighter, happier place to live; it was rather pleasant to see the optimistic spirit of the rulebook.

There was just one teensy-weenie problem with this setting, which was that it was sooooo boooooring that I could not, in my wildest dreams, have imagined even a remotely exciting adventure scenario for that campaign. It was a disaster. No adventure drivers were in place, no conflicts existed that could not be solved by a handful of diplomats and a few drinks over dinner. Where were the thrills? The chills? The catchy frills? Zip. Nada. Nix. That's why you need adventure drivers.

But (playing devil's advocate here) why not just make up adventures as you go along? Because your universe then lacks consistency and "realism," and the chaotic evolution of your universe will screw you up at every turn. How is Planet X supposed to be helpful to the player characters (PCs) in a current adventure if two adventures ago that world's government was trying to have the PCs assassinated? And how can Planet X offer so much up-front money if last week the world government was supposed to be broke? The players will pick up on an adventure's loose ends very quickly, and they'll hang the GM with them.

More importantly, looking at and developing adventure drivers gives you complete control over the kind of adventures you want to run in your campaign, and it lets you create an endless number of those adventures. You'll never find yourself stuck for new missions again, no matter how broad or limited the setting, with a basic outline of which groups are locking horns over which goals.

## Sparta Redux

By way of example, let's detail a planet with one of those monolithic world governments so often seen in science fiction, and see how many adventure drivers we can identify or invent for that setting. This should show the overwhelming number of adventures that could spring from one little ball of rock—and fill your entire gaming universe.

Two years ago, in issue #85, the world of Sparta was created and developed as an example of how a science-fiction nation can be based on a real-world country. We adopted the Soviet Union as Sparta's model, and we'll revisit it to see what adventure drivers it could offer an interstellar SF campaign.

The Soviet Union was characterized by a highly centralized bureaucracy, based in Moscow, that had considerable mistrust of the rest of the world (especially the USA). At its height, the USSR was regarded as a superpower, having nuclear weapons, ICBMs, manned spacecraft, a huge mechanized army, a vast state economy, world-wide political alliances, etc. It was noted for its intolerance of capitalism, foreigners, and non-Russian ethnic groups, and it had a very capable espionage apparatus that penetrated every major Western government.

However, the USSR could not keep pace with the West in economic, military, or technological arenas. Internal rivalries beset its inefficient and tyrannical government. Nuclear and chemical wastes polluted vast populated regions (e.g., Chernobyl). Ethnic rivalries within the USSR and its Warsaw-Pact allies (e.g., Armenians vs. Azerbaijanians, Ukrainians vs. Russians, Serbians vs. Bosnians vs. Croatians, Chechens vs. Russians) combined with a broad hatred of Soviet control over its satellites and internal republics to tear it apart slowly but violently. You probably know the rest of the story. Now we just apply it all to Sparta.

The Spartan Fusion, the world government of Sparta, sees the rest of the universe as its rival and potential enemy. This militant tyrannical xenophobia is at the top of the adventure-driver hierarchy, creating many international, internal, and personal conflicts. When combined with powerful regional hatreds, a desperate need for goods, careless disasters, and widespread corruption (among other things), it produces a tragically rich set of adventure drivers that could keep players screaming for months.

**The whole range of espionage adventures seen in books, TV shows, movies, and software and role-playing games is thus available for the GM's use ...**

Off the top of my pointy little head, we thus have the following adventuring possibilities for Soviet-modelled Sparta:

* The Spartan Republican Fusion, the world government of Sparta, has several huge intelligence-gathering agencies operating across Sparta and on other worlds in space. Internal-security agencies hunt down traitors, spies, revolutionaries, separatist or secessionist group leaders, dissidents, military renegades, terrorists, and organized-crime figures. Foreign-intelligence services attempt to steal the secrets of off-world corporations, nations, interstellar groups, and so forth. Of course, other off-planet groups are keeping a close eye on the SRF (and for good reason), so it's the Cold War all over again.

The whole range of espionage adventures seen in books, TV shows, movies, and software and role-playing games is thus available for the GM's use, assuming the PCs are spies for other agencies. Plus, there's the news angle: Everyone wonders what's really going on inside the SRF, and media moguls will pay big bucks to any reporter brave (or stupid) enough to sneak through the "Steel Curtain" that the SRF has put around itself. Just don't get caught, of course.

* Along with the espionage race comes an arms race. The SRF wants desperately to keep pace with its off-world rivals in the field of military weaponry and defenses; it was attacked from space a few times in the past, raising its already high level of xenophobia. Lately, off-world ships have been using huge particle accelerators aboard their spacecraft, so the Spartan Fusion has factories on land and space working nonstop to produce more, better, and bigger warcraft with huge particle accelerators.

These warcraft are very aggressive in defending whatever they perceive to be their territory or special interests. They are also not very well put together, and sometimes they suffer disasters or get into fights that they cannot win. Limited military conflicts with the SRF's space forces can occur at any time, and salvage missions to recover ruined SRF spacecraft would be invaluable to foreign militaries. (Of course, the SRF will kill anyone trying to steal their valuable wrecked top-secret spacecraft.) PCs who like combat might enjoy the sort of brinksmanship that the USA and USSR knew when rival subs, ships, and planes tested each other's limits.

* The totalitarian centralized government is often at odds with other republics in the nation, producing gross internal conflicts. Several republics were once independent nations with unique ethnic groups and intelligent species, but these were conquered some time ago by Sparta State, the core and most powerful republic in the SRF. The conquered territories bitterly resent their status.

Some of the disgruntled republics and subjugated races don't like each other very much, either, but they all hate Sparta State much more. It could accurately be said that they would fight Sparta State to their last breath, then kill each other before dying. This internal conflict will spawn everything from riots and illegal arms smuggling to terrorist bombings and assassinations.

Now, if several PCs happen to have relatives in one of these oppressed republics, those PCs may take a very personal interest in performing occasional anti-Spartan activities: smuggling in arms, uncensored news, high-tech equipment, or black-market consumer goods; helping dissidents and persecuted ethnic groups to escape; sabotaging Spartan military operations; building coalitions among republics to gain freedom if Sparta State grows

weak; and so on. Mercenary PCs might be hired for secret commando missions against Sparta State's prison camps or the army bases of rival republics.

* Even within the Central Government Offices of Sparta State, the internal rivalry between different department heads, major government officials, and military commanders is intense. Everyone struggles for more power, taking it from someone else, while trying to prevent anyone else from taking his own power away. The many government factions all grow out of larger ethnic, family, and personal conflicts that have gone on for years.

Sooner or later, some of these factions may look for outside help in winning a power struggle. Such outside help (the PCs) might be needed to dig up dirt on political rivals, bring in weapons from high-tech worlds, or tell a few lies to make some big political points for their employers. Of course, foreigners are always expendable, making this line of work very dangerous.

* The extraordinary corruption in the Spartan government has given birth to a vast network of criminal activity that is condoned and, in some cases, even supported by the government. The importation of high-tech black-market goods, driven by some military commanders, has also spawned a growing traffic in illegal drugs, and some republics and military units are even selling off their equipment to foreign powers in order to gain hard currency—acts for which certain people would quickly be executed for treason if they were ever caught.

The PCs might get involved if they are contacted by apparently legal organizations (actually fronts for illegal activity) and invited to bring in cargo shipments for tidy sums of money. The cargo might be drugs, weapons, or other materials that will earn the PCs death or jail terms if a curious customs official opens a sample crate. Then again, the PCs might be able to bribe him for his silence.

The PCs might also get involved if they are law-enforcement officials trying to shut down illegal drug trafficking, and they learn that some shipments go to Sparta. Shutting down a Spartan drug ring could be incredibly dangerous—they aren't known for their restraint or tolerance. The PCs might also be hired as mercenary soldiers or security guards for merchant ships heading for Sparta, to protect their shipments from theft or illegal seizure.

* Disasters have plagued Sparta for years. Many of these disasters are the result of carelessness in planning or carrying out industrial programs, and sometimes Sparta secretly calls for help on the interstellar market to clean things up.

If they have the proper training and tools, the PCs might be called in to offer advice on stopping a crop-killing bacteria that escaped from a germ-warfare lab (the Spartans will claim the bug "just appeared overnight"), detoxifying a grossly polluted river system (though the Spartans will never shut down the factories causing the pollution), or decontaminating a region covered with radioactive waste spread by a nuclear-plant meltdown.

If the PCs aren't diplomatic and cautious, they might be arrested for espionage. They might be arrested anyway if they get too nosy and uncover some horrible secret the Spartans would not like anyone else to find out.

* Lastly, the SRF needs new resources. It is using up its own supplies of oil, coal, gas, radioactives, and industrial metals at a great rate (thanks to extreme waste and carelessness), and it is exploring the rest of its solar system in search of more raw materials. Other interstellar companies have established secret mining bases in the Sparta system; if Sparta finds out, there will be war faster than you can pull a laser trigger.

The PCs could be working for those other companies as guards, soldiers, miners, freight haulers, industrial spies, or traders. Things will get hot very fast if anything goes wrong, so the PCs could be responsible for seeing that things don't go wrong.

If we didn't use Sparta, we could make up a planetary society for a world like Venus, which isn't habitable on its surface but could have mining colonies living in underground tunnels, rather like the world from the "Star Trek" episode, "Devil in the Dark." Here, we could say that long, hard hours of work is very stressful for the inhabitants, and they import every sort of entertainment device there is. This could include everything from taped recordings of music and news to hard drugs to gambling machines. The PCs could then take missions to haul in gaming goods or stop the drug traffic.

If that world's mines produce extremely valuable substances, then there could easily be smuggling operations going on for police PCs to investigate. The PCs could be hired to guard shipments of ore off-world. They could take part in land or space battles between heavily armored vehicles fighting for mining rights to a rich new ore field.

Thus these two adventure drivers (high-stress work, valuable materials sought by every government) work in concert to produce adventures for this unnamed world.

Take a look at your own SF campaign and write down what broad sources of conflict take place within it. Pencil in some ways that these basic conflicts can spread and grow more complex over time, taking many shapes. Then see how many possible specific adventures you can create that all spring from these drivers. Your universe will take on a remarkably complete and deep logic in its activities, and your players will notice it quickly.

See you next month. Cheers!

❑

**If the PCs aren't diplomatic and cautious, they might be arrested for espionage. They might be arrested anyway if they get too nosy ...**

# A Few Good Rangers

## New Ranger Kits for the AD&D® Game

***by Chris Perry***

Until *The Complete Ranger's Handbook* appeared, there were no kits specifically designed for the ranger. As it turned out, most of them were good, but many were restrictive occupationally (e.g., Falconer) or socially (e.g., Feralan). With this in mind, I've developed two new kits that are suitable for ranger PCs.

### The Deep Ranger

**Description:** Within the earth beneath us lie regions of passages and caves which touch upon and connect with the Underdark, a place inhabited by strange and fell creatures (Quaggoths, Derro, etc.). It's the job of the Deep Ranger to defend the good-aligned subterranean and surface races from the depredations of such monstrosities.

**Requirements:** Standard

**Primary Terrain:** Hill and mountain, since caves and subterranean entrances leading to the Underdark tend to be found there. As an alternative to those terrain types listed on page 13 of *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*, a Deep Ranger may select the Underdark as his primary terrain.

**Role:** Deep Rangers serve many purposes. They're hired by miners to keep watch over dangerous passageways, to clear out warrens and caves of small humanoids, and to act as guards in surface regions troubled by incursions of Drow, Duergar, and other deep-dwellers. There are more than enough towns and villages situated on or near such passages to warrant having Deep Rangers around. Of course, Deep Rangers also make for excellent dungeon explorers, whether on their own initiative or at the behest of someone else.

**Secondary Skills:** Any, although the sailor of shipwright skills are very rarely found among them.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Deep Rangers can take any weapons normally available. At least one weapon proficiency slot should be spent learning to use a small weapon like a short sword, dagger, or light crossbow. Later on, they may want to learn to use something more exotic, like a derro aklys or drow hand crossbow. There are no restrictions on weapon specializations (if you allow rangers in your campaign to specialize, that is).

**Non-Weapon Proficiencies:** *Bonus*–Blind-Fighting, Underground Navigation. *Recommended*–Languages (Dwarven, Undercommon, or other underground languages), Mountain Climbing, Set Snares, Slow Respiration, Sound Analysis, Fungi Recognition, Sign Language, Direction Sense.

**Armor/Equipment:** Standard.

**Species Enemy:** Any creature that can be found in the Underdark is suitable. This also includes those that don't live in the Underdark proper, but instead dwell in related settings (like dungeons).

**Followers:** Deep Rangers acquire the standard number of followers. They draw them primarily from among the creatures of the Underdark.

**Special Benefits:**
*Bonus Sphere*: Deep Rangers gain access to the Elemental (Earth) sphere.
*Bonus Skills*: Through their contact with dwarves and gnomes, who often assist in training them, Deep Rangers can determine the approximate depth underground (1-4 on d6).
*Enhanced Detection*: Deep Rangers have the ability to detect stonework traps, pits, and deadfalls equal to a thief's chance to Find Traps (see table 19 on page 23 of the DMG for the base percentage). This ability stops improving after 12th level.
*Reaction Bonus*: Due to their close working relationship with gnomes and dwarves, Deep Rangers receive a +1 reaction when dealing with these demi-humans while in his home region.
*Enhanced Stealth*: Deep Rangers have learned to Move Silently and Hide in Shadows without penalty while in subterranean places, whether natural or man-made. This allows them to deal effectively with the silent menaces that

they must face, especially bugbears and derro, and is entirely due to their familiarity with the setting.
*Enhanced Hearing*: Deep Rangers have the ability to detect noise as a thief of equal level (see page 23 of the DUNGEON MASTER® Guide).

**Special Hindrances:** Due to their extra training, Deep Rangers receive only one non-weapon proficiency at 1st level. They receive additional proficiencies at the normal rate. In addition, when using animal empathy, the animal's saving throw penaltychanges to -1 for every four experience levels gained, not three as is standard.

**Races Allowed:** Anyone who can be a ranger can take this kit (except for sea elves). If using the Demi-Ranger rules found in The Complete Ranger's Handbook (pg. 78-79), dwarves and gnomes can become Deep Rangers, too.

## The Desert Ranger

**Description:** There are many songs played by bards among the desert tribes, songs which tell of spirits that rise from the sands to slay evil tribesmen and bandits, who help wounded people to safety without so much as a word and then disappear. These "Ghosts of the Desert", as they're called, are actually Desert Rangers, and they possess abilities that make them dangerous opponents to face in the rocky wastelands and deserts they've come to know so well.

**Requirements:** Standard.

**Primary Terrain:** Desert, whether sandy or rocky, is the primary terrain of the Desert Ranger. No other terrain type is allowed.

**Role:** Desert Rangers have the same general goals that other rangers do. That is, they seek to defend their homelands from the evils that threaten them, while at the same time they try to be of assistance to those who are in need of help, such as caravans whose water has been stolen by desert raiders or bandits. Like other rangers, they will accept work as guides, whether to guide a group on an established trade route or along a trail leading to some ancient ruin.

**Secondary Skills:** None

**Weapon Proficiencies:**
*Required*–Choose any two from the following: Dagger, Lance (light), Spear, Scimitar, Sling, Long Sword. Others can be chosen as they see fit, but two of those chosen must come from the above list.

**Non-weapon Proficiencies:**
*Bonus*–Riding (Horse or Camel). *Recommended*–Animal Lore, Direction Sense, Disguise, Endurance, Local History, Distance Sense, Foraging, Signalling.

**Armor/Equipment:** Because of the extreme heat often found in desert environments, Desert Rangers will not wear metallic armor, and even other armor tends to be well ventilated.

**Species Enemy:** Any suitable desert species.

**Followers:** Desert Rangers receive only desert creatures for the most part (see Table 35, page 32 of *The Complete Ranger's Handbook* for details), though a few may come from an adjacent terrain that is relatively arid as well (20% chance per follower, no Swamp, Arctic, or Aquatic).

**Special Benefits:**
*Bonus Sphere*: Travelers.
*Stealth*: Desert Rangers are expert at hiding themselves in the desert, gaining a 15% bonus on their ability to hide in shadows. Furthermore, they're also expert at hiding their tracks (those who're tracking Desert Rangers suffer a -3 penalty on tracking rolls).
*Bonus Spell*: At 5th level, Desert Rangers gain the ability to Blur themselves (as the spell) once per day. It's an innate ability of the Desert Ranger from then on; they are able to will it into existence with neither sound nor gesture. It's thought that the Desert Ranger is able to use the desert's magic to cause his image to shift and waver, like the heat that rolls off the desert's surface. Strangely enough, this ability is usable in non-desert settings as well, but they must sprinkle some sand upon themselves in order to do so.
*Enhanced Survival*: Desert Rangers receive a +5 bonus on their Desert Survival proficiency rolls, since they're so attuned to their environment.

**Special Hindrances:** Desert Rangers suffer the same penalties that other desert-dwellers suffer from (can't use heavy armors, etc.). In addition, they also have to worry about assassins being hired by local bandits who would like to see their interference done away with (DM's will have to play this up a bit).

**Races Allowed:** Humans, elves, and half-elves. ❑

# Testing the Mettle

## Of Your AD&D® Game Characters

***by Ben R. Leeb***

One thing that seems to be lacking in the AD&D game proper is some measure of mental anguish. After all, you have these spanking new first-level characters coming right off the farm, descending into slimy, stinking dungeons and being subjected to some of the most mind-boggling indignities imaginable, without any emotional consequences. Shouldn't there be some means of assessing the effect of massive stress and strain on the PCs?

Of course! What better way to evoke the atmosphere of a dingy, cobweb-choked dungeon than a little of the "I haven't been able to eat fish since" form of psychological injury? Characters point to their scars with pride, right? So why not their neuroses? Imagine the tenth-level warrior who slays dragons for breakfast, but won't cross running water ... or the mage who refuses to cast *spider climb* because it "gives him the willies?" There is great value in giving a character a pet insecurity or two—it helps convey to the player the severity of the situation the character is in, and also serves to give the player an appreciation of that character's mortal limits. Seen as a "tragic flaw," it also allows for a better defined dramatic persona, shaping the character into a more vulnerable, believable and memorable person who will show some degree of caution or concern before jumping into some decaying, ghoul-haunted pit. If used with care and ingenuity, these simple rules can add nicely diverting elements of comedy and disaster to your game.

To begin with, these problems are referred to as phobias. A phobia is a strong, irrational aversion to some being, object, or process. A philia—An irrational attraction to some being, object or process—can also be gained. A phobia or philia can be acquired during an adventure under the following circumstances:

1) The PC is killed (and resurrected) or sees a good friend or relative perish in some gruesome fashion. Torture or the equivalent (rot grubs, severe fire damage) also counts, as would severe deprivation (such as starvation).

2) The PC acts in a way which is opposed to his alignment to a "wrath of the gods" degree, such as when a lawful good PC kills a defenseless old woman, or a chaotic evil PC saves a child from a burning building at the risk of his own life.

3) The PC witnesses or is affected by a traumatic or terrifying occurrence, supernatural or not, that is not covered by some other type of fear or horror check, but which the DM feels should still have mental consequences.

Phobias and philias beget a new statistic—Mettle, meaning "spirit," "courage," or "ardor." This attribute is calculated by halving the character's Wisdom score (rounding down) and adding his level (if the PC is multi-classed, use the highest level). So, for example, a 4th-level character with a Wisdom of 13 would have a Mettle of 10. This characteristic may not exceed the character's full Wisdom score. When a particularly horrible event occurs, roll 1d20 versus the PC's Mettle value, adding a cumulative +2 for each phobia beyond the first (eg; if the character were rolling to avoid getting a third phobia, he would roll at +4). If the number rolled is greater than this value, and is even, then the character has gained a related phobia; if the number is odd, then the character has gained a philia. Selecting a phobia or philia is a simple matter of choosing (or rolling 1d4) on Table 2 to find a "focus". See the Table for further details.

The next time (and every time thereafter) the PC comes in contact with the object of terror or seduction, the player must roll against this same number. If the roll is failed, the character is repelled by (or drawn to) the object to an irrational degree, and will refuse or demand to touch, be near, or attack/acquire that object. If the character is forced by circumstances to touch or interact with (or avoid) the object, then roll 1d6 on the Phobic Reaction table (Table 1) to find the penalties that character suffers while doing so. The effects last until the source of strain is somehow removed. Only one phobia or philia can apply at a time ... the DM should pick the most useful one.

**Example:** Devasti the mage (Mettle of 12) has fallen into a pit of acid. He

has taken massive damage (over three-quarters HP), so the DM calls for a Mettle roll. Devasti's player rolls a 16, meaning the mage has gained a phobia. Deciding to roll for a "focus", the DM gets a 2—"Beasts/Folks". Checking out the list, the DM comes up with Ophiophobia (snakes shed their skin, and Devasti's skin was "shedded" by the acid). Later on, the wizard's party is trapped in a dead-end corridor by a giant snake. Devasti fails his roll and, since he cannot get away, the DM rolls on Table 2, getting a 3 ("Hives/scratching")—the poor guy breaks out in a horrible rash, and will suffer the listed penalties until the snake is driven off.

You'll note the above guidelines require the DM have a good sense of story ... there is a difference between being burned and being really burned. The DM should reserve phobias or philias for situations where the action calls for them, and not require a Mettle roll every time a PC stubs his toe. The DM must also maintain this awareness of degree after a PC gains a phobia ... a character with Claustrophobia, for example, will still be able to go into dungeons (although he will be twitching the whole time), but he will not have to make a roll unless he falls into a dinky little pit. Likewise, a PC with Demonophilia will not feel compelled to "hug" every demon he comes across, but he may be so obsessed with viewing one that he must make a Mettle roll in order to retreat voluntarily from its presence.

The best way to use phobias and philias is as a way of punishing the characters for being blithe, foolhardy, or otherwise insufferable. A lawful good PC who steals an old widow's pension may have his god slap a case of Peccatophobia on him (forcing the PC to make a roll every time he lies, cheats or steals), or perhaps Dikephilia, compelling him to obsessively see that justice is done—forbidding anyone near him from lying, cheating or stealing. If a character volunteers to be the first one to squeeze into that teensy little tunnel—and is mangled by some slimy horror therein—it's time to roll.

Players of characters who have phobias or philias should play them out even when a roll is not required. A character with Bacteriophobia, for example, might refuse to drink out of a "strange" mug at the tavern and brings his own with him wherever he goes. He will probably also be obsessively clean and washes with soap and water every chance he gets. A PC with Ailurophilia might insist on taking his cats with him wherever he goes. The DM should consider handing out bonus XP (say 10 or so at a time) for players who role-play phobias and philias well and thoroughly.

Removing a phobia or philia is accomplished through means devised by the DM. Usually this will be in terms of facing the maddening object under horrible or heroic circumstances and not having a Reaction, at which point the DM will "cure" the problem. For example, if a PC with Hydrophobia dives into a lake to save a drowning beggar, makes his Mettle roll and succeeds at the rescue without drowning, then the DM may very well remove the phobia.

In terms of magic ... because a phobia or philia is not technically "madness," it is not appropriate to use when dealing with insanity-producing magic or monsters (although the experiences a PC has while insane could certainly engender a roll or two!). They also cannot be "cured" using spells, although Remove Fear will cancel the effects of one Reaction, and a person can be Charmed out of needing to make a roll or maintain a Reaction. An illusion representing a PC's phobia or philia is just as effective as the genuine article.

DMs may wish to come up with appropriate magic items related to phobias or philias, in terms of causing or curing them. Here are some examples:

***Poppet of Comforting:*** A small, stuffed doll which can alleviate a person's fears. Each charge used reduces the severity of a Reaction on Table 1 by one place, and may reduce the Reaction to nil. Must be held to be effective. Each poppet will have about 13 charges when found.

***Mask of Alarm:*** A large, hideous mask. If worn, all those within 30' must make a Mettle roll or gain a phobia based on the mask's subject—a cat-shaped mask may give Ailurophobia, for example. Each time the mask is used, there is a cumulative 5% chance the wearer will automatically gain the relevant phobia, and afterward may never use that particular mask again.

***Necklace of Coveting:*** A finely-wrought piece of jewelry, complete with hinged pendant. Opening the pendant displays a picture of some object. Any person beholding this rendering must make a Mettle roll or gain a philia based on the pictured item. A pendant containing the picture of a flaming brazier, for example, may cause pyrophilia.

The DM may also want to consider giving a major NPC a phobia or philia, just to round out his personality. One example is a king who has Ochlophobia, and therefore demands the PCs only meet with him one at a time. The rogue with Mythophilia—who couldn't tell the truth even if his life depended on it—is another. Monsters can also bear such afflictions (use morale instead of Mettle), and so can animals (like a PC's favorite mount ...). Some phobias (like Pyrophobia) can be assumed to exist in most animals.

**Table 1: Phobic Reactions**

| Roll | Reaction |
|---|---|
| 1 | Nausea/cold sweats (-1 DEX) |
| 2 | Stutter (Conversations take twice as long, -1 CHR, and spells with verbal components have their casting time doubled) |
| 3 | Hives/scratching (-1 DEX and CHR, -1 to-hit, and spells with somatic components have their casting time doubled) |
| 4 | Shakes (-2 DEX and CHR, -1 to-hit, and spells with somatic components have their casting time doubled) |
| 5 | Hiccup/sneezing fit (-2 DEX and to-hit, -1 init., all casting times doubled, move and talk at half speed) |
| 6 | Dizzy (-2 STR, DEX, CHR, to-hit, and init., all casting times doubled, and move and talk at half speed) |

## Table 2: Phobias and Philias

To use this table, simply choose (or roll 1d4) to find a useful "focus" subtable, locate the relevant prefix of those listed, then add the suffix -phobia or -philia as appropriate.

### 1. Conditions/Events

**Probable cause:** The character has suffered horrific treatment or injuries during or due to one of these conditions or events, or the character has caused such a horrific condition or event to occur.

**Examples:** A character who is tortured while bound may gain Merinthophobia, while a character who is carried off by a flying dragon may gain Claustrophilia (dragons can't get you if you're hiding in the closet). A lawful good character who pushed another person to their doom may gain Acrophobia as a divine punishment.

Acro- (heights)
Aero- (flying)
Agora- (open spaces)
Anemo- (drafts)
Anthro- (society)
Astra- (storms)
Ataxio- (mess)
Baro- (loss of gravity)
Batho- (depth)
Claustro- (enclosed spaces)
Harpaxo- (theft)
Homichlo- (fog)
Hygro- (dampness)
Merintho- (being bound)
Mono- (being along)
Nycto- (darkness)
Ochlo- (crowds)
Oneiro- (dreams)
Phengo- (sunlight)
Psychro- (cold)
Thermo- (heat)

### 2. Beasts/Folks

**Probable cause:** Character is horrifically attacked by person or creature, or by something which looks like that person or creature; some traumatic event or loss is caused by or associated with that type of person or creature. Examples: A character who is tortured by gnolls may gain Cynophobia (gnolls look somewhat like dogs), while a character who is carried off by a dragon but saved by a female warrior may gain Gynophilia.

Ailuro- (cats)
Andro- (men)
Arachno- (spiders)
Batracho- (reptiles)
Blenno- (slime)
Botano- (plants)
Cyno- (dogs)
Demono- (demons)
Entomo- (insects)
Gyno- (women)
Helmintho- (worms)
Hippo- (horses)
Ichthyo- (fish)
Muso- (mice)
Ornitho- (birds)
Ophio- (snakes)
Pedio- (children)
Phasmo- (ghosts)
Terato- (monsters)
Zeno- (foreigners)
Zoo- (animals)

### 3. Injuries/Feelings

**Probable cause:** Some terrible event or wound was caused by one of the following feelings, actions, or sources of injury.

**Examples:** A character who was tortured may gain Algophobia, while a character who was carried off by a dragon because he fell asleep on guard duty may gain Hypegiaphilia.

Algo- (pain)
Auto- (pride)
Bacterio- (germs)
Ballisto- (missiles)
Belono- (sharp objects)
Chero- (gaiety)
Dike- (justice)
Dipso - (drinking)
Dysmorpho- (deformity)
Eleuthero- (freedom)
Hemato- (blood)
Hypegia- (responsibility)
Kakorraphia- (failure)
Kategelo- (ridicule)
Mania- (insanity)
Mastigo- (torture)
Mytho- (making false statements)
Noso- (disease)
Paralipo- (neglect of duty)
Peccato- (sinful acts)
Pharmaco- (drugs)
Pnigo- (choking)
Pono- (fatigue)
Scopo- (being stared at)
Toxio- (poison)
Zelo- (jealousy)

### 4. Places/Things

**Probable Cause:** The character suffers some grievous injury or loss while in a particular place or because of some specific thing.

**Examples:** A character who sees his gnoll torturers cutting his friends into steaks might gain Carnophobia, while a character who was snatched off a cliff by a dragon may get Cremnophilia (manifested as a compulsion to tempt fate over and over again).

Carno- (meat)
Chrometo- (money)
Cremno- (precipices)
Cryo- (ice/frost)
Crystallo- (crystals)
Dormato- (home)
Dora- (fur)
Ecclesia- (churches)
Electro- (electricity)
Hiero- (sacred things)
Hydro- (water)
Limno- (lakes)
Mechano- (machines)
Metallo- (metal)
Necro- (death/dead things)
Pyro- (fire)
Scio- (shadows)
Tapho- (places of burial)
Thalasso- (the sea)
Vestio- (clothing)

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